

U.S. House opposes declaration of Palestinian state

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution Tuesday telling Yasser Arafat not to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state and urging the Clinton administration to make clear that it would not recognise such a declaration. The non-binding measure won easy 380-24 approval, although several opponents said it was a mistake to single out only the Palestinian leadership for criticism and to take a stand that could be seen as interference in Israel's May 17 general elections. The resolution, which the Senate passed in similar form last week on a 98-1 vote, states that "any attempt to establish Palestinian statehood outside the negotiating process will invoke the strongest congressional opposition."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الراية"

Lebanese students protest against Israeli, Syrian forces

BEIRUT (AFP) — Around 600 Lebanese students staged a rally at a university campus here on Tuesday, brandishing banners calling for Israeli and Syrian forces to leave Lebanon. The demonstrators also protested against the arrest of a number of student supporters of former Prime Minister General Michel Aoun for distributing leaflets calling for an end to the military occupation. Anti-riot police were out in force at the entrance to the University of Saint Joseph and at several major junctions on the road to the U.N. headquarters in the centre of the city. Police confirmed that they had detained around half a dozen people for questioning and then released them, describing a figure of 20 arrests reported by Lebanese newspapers as exaggerated.

Volume 24 Number 7097

AMMAN WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 1999, DHUL QADAH 29, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Iran frees 450 Iraqi PoWs

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iran freed 450 Iraqi prisoners of war held since their eight-year war, Iraq announced Tuesday, amid signs of warming ties between the two former foes. News of the release came as the official Iraqi News Agency reported that President Saddam Hussein had received a message from his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Khatami expressing a desire that Iran "strengthen and deepen" its relations with Iraq. Tuesday's prisoner handover was confirmed by the International Committee of the Red Cross, although it referred to 449 prisoners.

Yugoslavia seeks arrest of ethnic Albanian chief

BELGRADE (R) — Serbian police issued an international arrest warrant on Tuesday for a key ethnic Albanian leader in the Kosovo peace talks under way in Paris, the official Tanjug news agency reported. The agency said the police had submitted the warrant for the arrest of Hashim Thaqi, head of the ethnic Albanian delegation at the talks, to the Paris headquarters of the international police organisation Interpol. "Thaqi is charged with several murders, abductions, armed robberies and other crimes committed in Serbia's southern province of Kosovo and Metohija," it said (see story on page 4).

N. Korea allows U.S. inspection of suspect site

WASHINGTON (AFP) — North Korea has agreed to allow U.S. inspections of a suspected nuclear site in a deal that paves the way for improved ties, the State Department said Tuesday. The agreement concerns an underground site at Kumchangri in North Korea that the United States suspects may constitute part of a clandestine nuclear weapons programme. The accord followed 14 days of negotiations between the two sides that opened at the U.S. mission to the United Nations on Jan. 27.

Gunmen hit Haitian PM's car

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AFP) — Gunmen fired on the car of Haiti's prime minister, wounding a guard, local radio reported Tuesday. Acting Prime Minister Jacques Alexis was not in the vehicle when the shooting occurred Monday, but a bodyguard received injuries to his eye and arm from flying glass, Haiti Inter radio said. No one claimed responsibility for the attack and no arrests were made immediately. Alexis told the radio that the shooting was not a political act but instead was due to general insecurity in parts of Port-au-Prince.

Alert declared for Mexican volcano

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Evacuation centres near the Popocatepetl volcano were put on alert Tuesday amid increased volcanic activity and concern that major explosions could take place. Since late Monday, officials registered three major eruptions of steam, gas and ash. "There were tremors of high frequency and durability," said Mexico's state Civil Protection Director Anselmo Sotelo. The intense activity forced authorities to "step up preventive measures because of the possibility that the next few hours or days there could be major explosions," he said. An estimated 200,000 people live around the mountain.

King, Mubarak inaugurate Jordan-Egypt power grid link

By Saad G. Hattar

AQABA — His Majesty King Abdullah and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday formally inaugurated a multi-million dollar strategic project linking the power grids of the two countries, the first step towards a five-nation regional link that excludes Israel.

Funded by the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the project cost \$229 million, \$80 million of which is being paid by Jordan while the rest is being covered by Egypt.

The power grid link had been scheduled for official inauguration late last year but was postponed twice due to King Hussein's illness and his subsequent passing away on Feb. 7.

King Abdullah and Mubarak inaugurated the Egyptian side of the link at Egypt's Red Sea resort of Taba and then moved to the Jordanian side at Aqaba.

The power link falls within a broader strategic project, initially estimated to cost a total of \$600 million.

designed to connect the Jordanian grid by the year 2002 with those of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey.

The second phase of the project, connecting Jordan with Syria, is due to be completed by the end of this year at an estimated total cost of \$95 million, according to Jordanian officials.

Iraq's part of the project, however, has been put on hold till the year 2002. Among the first proponents of the plan, Iraq has lagged in its participation because its own national power network was badly hit during the 1990 Gulf War and has become dilapidated during the nearly nine years of U.N. sanctions.

The power grid link is designed to share the excesses in capacities of generated energy and reduce investments in new power generation by pooling power resources.

Once accomplished, the five-state linking project should integrate within a wider Mediterranean network.

Eventually, Turkey will be linked with Bulgaria and

from there, with the rest of Europe.

The Jordan-Egypt line is capable of carrying 130 megawatts and will be expanded to 350 megawatts once Syria, Turkey and Lebanon come on board, said Egyptian Electricity and Power Minister Maha Abaza in a speech.

The network is expected to result in a savings of \$2 billion a year by using excess generating capacity in each country at non-peak times.

Israel was to have joined the grid under regional economic projects aimed at cementing peace agreements with its Arab neighbours, but such schemes have withered since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in 1996.

Thirteen kilometres of underwater cable were laid across the Gulf of Aqaba between Jordan and Egypt at a cost of around \$70 million. At the time of construction Jordanian officials said it was the deepest electricity link of its kind.

(Agencies contributed to this article)



His Majesty King Abdullah and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak cut a ribbon Tuesday in Taba inaugurating the electric grid linkage project between the two countries (Photo by Yousef 'Allan')

Jordanian, Egyptian, PNA FMs to discuss statehood issue

By Saad G. Hattar

AQABA — The foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) will hold a tripartite meeting in Amman next Saturday in line with efforts to support Palestinian negotiators ahead of May 4, the target date for the declaration of a Palestinian state, Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib said here Tuesday.

"The three ministers will discuss on Saturday means to support the Palestinian interlocutor at this crucial stage, while the Palestinians are engaged in intensive consultations in the Arab and international arenas regarding various issues, including the May 4 date," Khatib told the Jordan Times.

The timing of the tripartite meeting was announced during a summit held at the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Taba by His Majesty King Abdullah and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

The two leaders, who met on the sidelines of the inauguration of a link between power grids of both countries, held talks on all tracks of the faltering Middle East peace process as well as means of boosting Jordanian-Egyptian ties.

It was King Abdullah's first official talks abroad since he assumed his constitutional powers on Feb. 7 following the death of his father King Hussein.

Meanwhile, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa lashed out at Israel and stressed that the declaration of a Palestinian state "is an unequivocal strategic choice for the Palestinians."

Musa, however, hinted that the timing of the declaration

could be flexible in accordance with Palestinian interests.

"Declaring a state is a strategic stance with no concessions. As for the date, it could be a tactical subject for discussion — it could be May or June," he noted.

Musa dubbed Israel's unilateral stance on east Jerusalem as "snobbish, distortion and occupation."

"The Jerusalem issue is still pending and unresolved," Musa said. "It could either be resolved on the basis of internationalisation of the city — in accordance with European calls — or via negotiations on the basis of international legitimacy."

He stressed that an agreement on the final status of the Holy City "should never be reached by one party only."

Israel's foreign minister, Ariel Sharon, said Tuesday that the 1947 resolution on the "internationalisation" of Jerusalem was "null and void," adding that Israel would be launching an international campaign to explain its stance on Jerusalem as its "united capital" (see separate story).

Israel occupied and annexed east Jerusalem in June 1967. The PNA seeks to claim the Holy City as the capital of the future Palestinian state.

This thorny political issue is due to top the final status talks between the PNA and Israel, slated to end by May 4.

PNA leader Yasser Arafat, now on a shuttle mission seeking international support for the PNA's rights, visited Cairo and Amman last week as part of efforts to muster Arab support vis-à-vis Israel.

Jordan and Egypt are the only two Arab states which have struck peace treaties with Israel.

Water plan to be presented soon 'Government to set controls on wells, domestic supplies'

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The government plans to take control of 1,654 privately-owned wells and to limit domestic water supplies this summer as part of an emergency plan to counter an expected water crisis compounded by the current drought, officials said Tuesday.

It will also insist on obtaining its full amount of water from Israel as stipulated in the 1994 peace treaty, on getting more of its water share from Syria, and might introduce drastic measures to limit agricultural production to less water-intensive crops.

"These are the highlights of an emergency plan that is expected to be unveiled during a Cabinet meeting in the coming few days," one official,

who requested anonymity, told the Jordan Times.

His Majesty King Abdullah was expected to chair the proposed Cabinet meeting to lend full support as the government embarks on carrying out the challenging mission, officials said.

Efforts by past governments to take control of water wells and to introduce changes to water-intensive crops such as bananas and tomatoes have been obstructed by influential landlords and farmers who control most of the lands in the Jordan Valley, the Kingdom's main bread basket.

The Water Authority said it would reduce the amount of water pumped to the Southern Ghor region for agricultural use by 50 per cent, to the Northern Ghor by 20 per cent and to the Central Ghor by 10

per cent.

At present, around 650 million cubic metres (mcm) of water per year are used for agriculture, part of which is non-renewable, according to water experts.

"The fact that King Abdullah will preside over the meeting that will announce these sensitive measures means the government is serious about implementing them," said one politician.

Officials said the Interior Ministry, backed by security agencies it looks after, would be responsible for ensuring control over private wells, whose owners are allegedly exploiting an estimated 320 million cubic metres of water a year.

Most of them are only paying a fraction of the cost of water they extract in practices

that have continued unabated for years.

"If the government cannot find extra water supplies, it will have to cut down on domestic water supplies during summer to once a week instead of twice," said another government official.

Over the past decades, the government allowed landowners to pump water from wells for agricultural and domestic use in areas that have no direct supplies. Each well has an average pumping capacity of 50-100 cubic metres per hour.

According to law, owners are required to install metres at all licensed wells to allow the Water Authority to take readings to ensure that the annual quota of 50,000 cubic metres of water each is not surpassed. Violators are required to pay

250 fils per each cubic metre above the set amount.

However, overpumping has continued and meters are occasionally reset or broken. Successive governments were seen to be turning a blind eye to reported violations, according to private and official water industry sources, who claimed that of the 1,654 wells, 528 are unlicensed and therefore have no meters.

So far, 10 well-owners have legalised their status, following the previous government's crackdown against the abuse of these wells. Another 44 well-owners are currently rectifying their situations, while five risk closure if they do not yield to the law. Two have already been shut down, according to officials.

(Continued on page 2)

Minister names new Pan-Arab Games director in surprise move

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — With less than five months remaining until the opening of the Pan-Arab Games, Minister of Sports and Youth Mohammad Khair Mansour Tuesday named Bassem Haroun as the new games director, replacing Issam Aridah, who held the post since Jordan was named host country.

The timing and the move surprised most observers, including members of the Higher Organising Committee (HOC) which had recommended Aridah's appointment by then head of the committee HRH Prince Abdullah.

Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Vice President Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz, a member of the HOC, was surprised at the nomination and said that the committee had not met and that there was no indication or talk of change.

Last week, HRH Prince Faisal was designated as chairman of the HOC, which includes officials from the Ministry of Sports and Youth in addition to the JOC.

According to Mansour's decision, Haroun, who was deputy chairman of the Games Technical Committee, will take over the top job overseeing the many subcommittees organising the 9th Games — renamed Al Hussein Tournament — which will be held in Amman this summer.

Aridah's removal comes at a crucial time, with officials and subcommittees calling for urgent measures to prepare for the mega-event expected to bring together 3,000 athletes.

He had just returned from Egypt last week after securing an additional \$300,000 in sponsorship from the Council of Arab Sports Ministers bringing the total amount of funding for

the Games to \$500,000.

"I was surprised by the decision. I did not hand in a resignation. It was the minister's decision," Aridah told the Jordan Times.

"The important thing is for the Games to be a success. Things move on," he added.

"We invested a lot of effort to set a strong base in the past couple of months. I can only hope that the Hussein Tournament will be the best."

Aridah, long-acknowledged for his command of the job, was hailed by officials as the best person for the position after many years of service as head of the Hussein Sports City before his appointment as secretary general of the Ministry of Culture and Youth and later on advisor at the Prime Ministry.

Aridah spearheaded the campaign to bring in more funding, set up an Internet site for the

Games and worked to assure that the building of sports facilities would be concluded on time.

Another issue solved this week was that UAE TV would lend Jordan Television the necessary equipment to cover the Aug. 15-31 event after it was estimated that JTV needed JD6 million to acquire its own equipment.

The resolving of the coverage issue paved the way for the signing of the promotion and marketing rights agreement with the Saudi firm RAF for \$1.5 million paid to Jordan in addition to 70 per cent of any additional income.

Officials say construction work is on schedule, mainly the JD4 million multi-purpose indoor stadium with a 7,000-seat capacity, and the Olympic-size swimming pool, which has come under heavy criticism for not being covered to be utilised

in winter.

However, work on the track and field stadium, in addition to installing and upgrading facilities with electronic timing machines and other requirements, was moving at a slower pace.

Moreover, JOC officials have expressed concern that a host of administrative and organisational issues seem to have overshadowed the lax attitude of some federations overseeing the training of athletes — a key priority as host country.

The Jordanian government had initially earmarked JD18 million for the event and additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid was secured by exempting Jordan from the 50 per cent Arab Sports Federation margin of profit on promotion and television coverage.

(Continued on page 2)

U.N. resolution on international Jerusalem 'null and void,' Sharon says

Agencies

ISRAELI FOREIGN Minister Ariel Sharon summoned the diplomatic corps on Tuesday and informed them Israel considered a 1947 U.N. resolution making Jerusalem an international city to be "null and void."

"Resolution 181 on Jerusalem not being a part of Israel is null and void," Sharon told the assembled ambassadors. "Jerusalem will stay forever the capital of the Jewish

people and of the state of Israel.

"I would like to welcome you to Jerusalem the capital of the Jewish people since 3,000 years and of the Jewish state for the last 51 years," Sharon said.

Recalling his own role in the fierce fighting for west Jerusalem following the 1948 creation of Israel, the reserve general added: "It is very hard to imagine after all these years that we have again to struggle for Jerusalem."

In Egypt, Foreign Minister Amr

Musa rejected Sharon's comments.

"Their position is... distorted," Musa said. "There should be agreement on the final status of Jerusalem. [It]... cannot be formed based on the will of one state."

Sharon was reacting to the European Union's (EU's) refusal to recognise Israeli sovereignty over any part of the Holy City.

The EU reiterated its position to Israel in a message March 1 that under international law Jerusalem remained a "separate entity" from

the Jewish state.

The EU message followed Israeli foreign ministry attempts to pressure diplomats against visiting Orient House, the unofficial PLO representation in Arab east Jerusalem.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday underlined the "gravity" with which Israel views the EU stance in a protest lodged with the German ambassador to Israel, Theodore Wallau.

"Time will not go backward and Jerusalem will never be divided

again," Netanyahu told Wallau.

Under a 1947 U.N. partition plan for Palestine which led to Israel's creation, Jerusalem was to have been given the status of an international city separate from the Jewish state.

Israel, however, made west Jerusalem its capital in 1948 after Arabs rejected the U.N. plan.

The international community has never recognised that decision or Israel's illegal annexation of Arab east Jerusalem following its occupa-

pation of that part of the city during the 1967 war. East Jerusalem is now home to some 200,000 Palestinians and 160,000 Israelis.

In 1980 the Israeli parliament proclaimed all of Jerusalem the "eternal and indivisible capital of Israel."

Defending Jerusalem has become one of the main themes of Netanyahu's campaign for Israel's May 17 parliamentary and prime ministerial elections.

Ministers' resignation from Senate unlikely — official

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The resignation of two senators from the Upper House following their appointments to the Cabinet of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is unlikely to happen, an official said.

"It is unlikely nor is it expected that the two deputy prime ministers, Marwan Hmoud and Rima Khalaf, who are also senators, will submit their resignations from the Upper House," an informed source told the Jordan Times on Tuesday.

Parliament's rejection of Rawabdeh's resignation as a deputy in the Lower House, "could set a precedent to

rejecting the resignation of the two senators," the source added.

Rawabdeh, who was appointed premier on March 4, last week submitted his resignation to the 80-member chamber. But the resignation was rejected by 59 lawmakers out of the 67 who attended the session. Four members in the Upper House were part of the recent changes in both the government and the Royal Court.

But according to Upper House law, senators appointed to the Royal Court "cannot also maintain their membership in the Senate."

"A Royal Decree is expected to be issued soon appointing two new members in the

Upper House replacing Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and His Majesty King Abdullah's political advisor Adnan Abu Odeh," the source said.

"Former Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and former Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani are expected to be appointed as the new senators," he added. He said that most former prime ministers and some Royal Court chiefs are appointed as members of the Senate.

However, some observers were expecting Hmoud's and Khalaf's resignations to be submitted according to the decision taken during the previous government to separate

the powers of the state.

Four members in the previous government of Prime Minister Tarawneh submitted their resignations from the Senate.

Still, some parliamentarians expressed satisfaction that Cabinet members could continue to hold their seats in the Senate. Meanwhile, others said that the principle of separating the powers of the Kingdom's three authorities "is considered as a healthy decision," one member in the Parliament said.

"Some parliamentarians are afraid that preventing deputies or senators from becoming ministers in the future might set a precedent," he said.

'Government to set controls on wells, domestic supplies'

(Continued from page 1)

Water Minister Kamel Mahadin reported that Jordan's water deficit for the second half of this year was projected at approximately 10 per cent, with demand totalling 283mcm and supply amounting to 254mcm. Dam levels this year are only at around 35 per cent of full capacity following low rainfall this winter.

Official figures suggest that by the year 2000, Jordan's population, growing at around 3.5 per cent per year, will require 1.257 million cubic metres of water to cover minimum needs while resources will be capable of supplying only 960 million cubic metres.

Jordan rejected an Israeli request to reduce water amounts agreed to in the peace treaty by 40 per cent due to a regional drought.

"We are still insisting on full implementation of the peace treaty and no agreement has been reached yet," Jordan Valley Authority Secretary General Dureid Mahasneh said yesterday after concluding a session of negotiations with the Israelis near the Dead Sea.

Under the peace treaty, Israel extracts 12mcm of water from the Yarmouk River in summer, and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33mcm from the river, of which 20mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer.

Israel said it was not able this winter to collect the 20mcm from the Yarmouk because of a regional drought.

According to the treaty, Jordan and Israel should cooperate to supply the Kingdom with an additional quantity of 50mcm of drinkable water

every year.

But Israeli officials said that because the two countries have so far not found sources of water to supply this amount, the Jewish state "might not be able this year to meet its kind gesture to provide the 25mcm of the 50mcm."

Meanwhile, a 225-page study conducted by an international panel of scientists warned yesterday that Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians would suffer chronic water shortage if they do not join forces to deal with the problem.

The panel, which groups researchers from the U.S., Jordan and Israel, said the region receives on average less than 250 millimetres of rain a year, noting that at the same time the area's current 12 million population is increasing by more than two per cent annually.

Sahhaf in Cairo for meeting

CAIRO (AFP) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf arrived here Tuesday to attend an Arab League meeting which risks to become stormy if Iraq fails to win Arab support in its conflict with the West.

Sahhaf and his delegation were met at Cairo's international airport by Arab League Assistant Secretary General Abdel Rahman Al Sehibani, airport officials said.

Iraq on Tuesday urged the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting which opens Wednesday in Cairo to denounce U.S.-British air attacks and U.N. sanctions which were imposed on Baghdad after it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

"The children of the Arab Nation call on the Arab foreign ministers to condemn the aggression against Iraq and reject the (U.N.) embargo," Iraq's Al Jumhuriya government daily said.

The daily warned against "all attempts to introduce ideas hostile to the Arab Nation into the meeting." In an apparent reference to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which provide facilities to U.S. and British planes.

Sahhaf stormed out of an Arab League meeting in January which had convened to discuss the Iraqi crisis when the Arab countries failed to denounce the U.S. and British air strikes.

The Iraqi crisis will be the main issue on the agenda at the two-day Cairo meeting and Gulf officials say they expect heated exchanges between Iraq and the Gulf states.



POLICE DETAIN LEFTIST DEMONSTRATOR: Turkish riot police detain by force a leftist student in the Istanbul University main campus on Tuesday. Authorities declared a state of alert in Istanbul following a string of Kurdish terrorist attacks in the city and rounded up about 100 leftist demonstrators to maintain security in the 12-million metropolis. Some 1,000 policemen were stationed outside the campus in the historical district of Beyazit and the demonstrators were detained as they gathered to commemorate the killing of seven leftist students 21 years ago in a bomb attack (AP photo)

Bedouin refugees face uncertain future after fleeing their homes

KETZIOI (AFP) — In the windswept mountains of Israel's Negev desert, several hundred exhausted and hungry bedouin face another night in limbo, threatened with expulsion from Israel and fearful of bloody reprisals if they return home to Egypt.

Around 400 men, women and children from the Azazmeh tribe arrived here early Monday after trekking for two days across the freezing desert, protesting that they had been viciously bounded out of their homes by Egyptian police.

In their makeshift encampment — declared a closed military zone by the Israeli army and surrounded by barbed wire — the bedouin sit in clusters with their goats, camels or donkeys, a scene more reminiscent of biblical times.

They have no shelter from the biting winds and many appear malnourished.

"The Egyptian police treated us like dogs, that's why we had to leave," said tribal chief Sheikh Salem

Swellam Audi, 50.

He said the Azazmeh began the 40-kilometre march eastwards on Friday after their homes in Wadi Al Jaifa were destroyed by Egyptian police over a vendetta with rival tribe Attaya.

The feud erupted after two Attaya members were killed by Azazmeh and attempts to end the dispute turned sour.

"We came to an arrangement with them in which we had to pay two million pounds (around \$400,000) as compensation," Sheikh Salem recounted. But the Egyptian police arrested his cousin who was to hand over the money and confiscated the funds, he said.

"We will never go back to Egypt alive. It's better to starve," exclaimed Salem Audi, 55. "In Egypt we were accused of being the Jews of the Sinai. But here we are very well treated by the Israelis who are providing us with food and water and medicines."

Two ambulances and water trucks have been despatched by Israel to

the makeshift camp, where military personnel are handing out blankets, clothing food and water to their charges — who face another night without shelter.

Israeli reserve army doctor, Avi Lauden, said the main complaint was the cold, and according to the bedouin, three members of the tribe died during the desert crossing.

It is the first time this tribe has ventured into Israel from the Sinai. Another branch of the same tribe lives in the Jewish state, but the two have had no contact since the end of Israel's occupation of the Sinai peninsula in 1982.

An Israeli bedouin sheikh from the same tribe, Oda Abu Amr, has lodged an appeal with the supreme court warning that the refugees risk becoming the victim of "bloody vengeance" if they return.

The court has barred any expulsion until next week to allow his case to be heard, although Israel's hardline Foreign Minister

Ariel Sharon said they should be kicked out.

"Already yesterday, we should have sent them back. They have to go back to their places," Sharon told a press conference, describing the situation as a "very serious problem."

"I don't think that Israel or any other country can allow that suddenly a thousand people cross its border," he said.

Shmuel Rifman, a representative of Israeli villages in the Negev, said the bedouins should be expelled because Israel was a Jewish state which had no obligation to shelter Arab refugees "even if they have good reason to seek asylum."

Egypt denied Monday there had been any major exodus of bedouin to Israel.

"Only a few individual groups of bedouin illegally infiltrated" the Israeli border from Egypt, a police spokesman in Sinai said.

Minister names new Pan-Arab Games director in surprise move

(Continued from page 1)

The Arab ministerial committee charged with overseeing the Kingdom's preparations pledged their support for the Amman Games, saying they would recommend to the Arab League that Jordan receive additional funding and assistance.

They will also try to garner more support from the Gulf Cooperation Council and other states capable of sponsoring the event to improve the Kingdom's infrastructure and update its sports facilities.

Meanwhile, 16 countries have confirmed participation. They are, in addition to the host, Egypt, Iraq, Syria,

Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Sudan, Oman, Lebanon and Palestine have not finalised the nature of their participation, and organisers were still awaiting initial word from the UAE and Bahrain.

The preliminary number of 26 events is expected to be trimmed. A total of eight events were set to be scrapped since the minimum number of participating teams in any event should not be less than five teams for men and four for women.

The 8th Pan Arab Games in Beirut had 19 countries taking part in 20 sports events.

According to officials,

belated confirmation by some countries was mainly due to the preference of professional athletes to participate in the World Athletics Championships which coincide with the Pan-Arab Games. Officials expected the strain between Gulf countries and Iraq to also affect the Games.

The Amman Games will be followed by the first Arab Paralympics.

The Pan-Arab Games have only been held eight times: Alexandria in 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.

JORDAN TELEVISION

19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:23 Fajr
05:40 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:44 Dhuhur
15:09 'Asr
17:48 Maghreb
19:05 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifiah, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4634590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624834/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical

JORDAN TELEVISION

19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
There will be a gradual rise in temperatures with winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

JORDAN TELEVISION

19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Hanna Mansour 4750197
Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq 4788285
Dr. Nidal Dahleh 5827195
Dr. Khalil Ramadan 5358723
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

JORDAN TELEVISION

19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Hanna Mansour 4750197
Dr. Sa'ad Tawfiq 4788285
Dr. Nidal Dahleh 5827195
Dr. Khalil Ramadan 5358723
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdi 5661317
Husseini Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akhleh Maternity 4642442/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhus, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hilma Modern Hospital (09)990990

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:30 Damascus (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:55 Larnaca (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:50 Istanbul (RJ)
17:05 Paris (RJ)

Other Flights

09:30 Cairo (M5)
10:30 Jeddah (SV)
12:20 Kuwait (KU)
13:10 Tunis (TU)
13:20 Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Milan (AZ)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
15:30 Algiers (AH)
16:45 Paris (FY)
18:05 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
20:30 Frankfurt (LH)
00:55 London, Damascus (BA)
01:25 Athens (OA)
02:00 Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QALIA) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QALIA) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QALIA) (RW)

Other Flights

06:30 Larnaca (CY)
06:50 Damascus, London (BA)
07:25 Paris (AF)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
12:00 Medina, Jeddah (SV)
13:20 Kuwait (KU)
14:10 Bahrain (GF)
14:10 Tunis (TU)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
15:50 Milan (AZ)
17:45 Sanaa (YY)
19:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
02:45 Athens (OA)
03:00 Milan (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QALIA) (RW)



Her Majesty Queen Noor on Tuesday receives doctors from the U.S.-based charity group Operation Smile (photo by Crystal)

Operation Smile brings hope to children of the Middle East

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — The lives of more than 5,000 children around the world will change for the better with Operation Smile's World Journey of Hope '99, the world's largest-ever surgical mission, dedicated to the neediest children to help them smile.

Doctors of the Operation Smile team arrived in Jordan on Monday to offer condolences to Her Majesty Queen Noor on the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein.

Operation Smile, founded in 1982, is a humanitarian and medical relief organization dedicated to helping improve the health and lives of children worldwide by correcting their facial malformations.

"It is unthinkable that any child in this world is forced to suffer from the emotional and physical trauma of deformities that can be cured with a relatively simple medical procedure," said William Magee, an American plastic surgeon who chairs the Operation Smile board of directors. Magee co-founded the organization along with his wife, Kathy, a nurse and clinical social worker.

One thousand professional medical volunteers are complemented in their work by approximately 2,000 medical colleagues in cities and remote areas around the world.

world.

The operation's mission includes outpatient and major surgery, general neurological or gynecological procedures, general medical examinations and treatment, family practice and minor surgery.

The team also provides basic dentistry, eye examinations and glasses, treatment of medical conditions caused by an unsound environment or poverty, education and training and instruction in public health improvements.

In addition to contributing free medical treatment and aftercare to children and young adults, Operation Smile's team trains local medical professionals and provides necessary equipment in 16 developing countries and the United States.

This year, the team is on its "World Journey of Hope '99" — an ambitious plan to care for more than 5,000 children worldwide and distribute some 200,000 pounds of medical equipment to be shipped.

"People of the world need to disregard political and cultural differences and work together for the sake of a child," said Kathy Magee.

"With global support, Operation Smile's world journey can transform the lives of children around the world, bringing hope to those who otherwise would be rejected."

The World Journey of Hope began its nine-week tour on Feb. 17. Countries on the surgical mission include Brazil, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Kenya, countries in the Middle East, Morocco, Nicaragua, Panama, Philippines, Romania, Russia, Thailand, Venezuela and Vietnam. Before departing from the United States, Operation Smile treated 200 American children.

Today, the team heads for Gaza, where doctors will perform 150 free operations on Palestinian children.

In the 16 years since their first mission to the Philippines, Operation Smile's volunteers have provided free reconstructive surgery to more than 45,000 children. The organization now has 24 chapters in the United States and domestic medical programs in 11 sites under the auspices of the U.S. National Domestic Programme Office. It has an international headquarters in the American state of Virginia. It also serves 40 international sites in developing countries and has attracted more than 3,000 medical volunteers.

The organization provides \$28 million in donated medical services annually and has trained more than 10,000 health care professionals in the United States and abroad.

Union to hear bank employees' complaints on new hours

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — The 15,000-strong Jordan Trade Union of Insurance and Auditors Employees (JTUIAE) will meet on Saturday to consider ways to protest a recent decision which forced staff at Jordan's 22 commercial banks to put in three extra hours a day for an extra day off a week.

"The meeting will also focus on the consequences of the Central Bank of Jordan's (CBJ) decision and proposals to secure bank employees' rights," Fakhri Zayadin, JTUIAE deputy director told the Jordan Times on Tuesday.

The new system, enforced by the CBJ on March 1, has been opposed by most bank employees who say they had to introduce drastic changes to their lifestyles.

But bank managers believe the new eight-hour, five-days-a-week system will bolster Jordan's economic performance because it allows the financial sector longer daily contacts with the outside world.

"We are going to hold talks with bank employees to see how their lives were affected by the extension of working hours as the union cannot take any decision without involving them," Zayadin said.

Under the new system, Saturday was decreed a second day off, but banks now open from Sunday to Thursday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with a thirty minute lunch break.

This has brought the total number of working hours to a maximum of 42.5 instead of 36 hours, and most staff are seeking financial compensation.

Previously, the banking sector followed a nation-wide system of a one-day weekend on Friday, operating from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

"There are bitter complaints, especially from working mothers, and even from their husbands who have encountered familial problems as they leave their children on their own for a long time without care," Zayadin told the Jordan Times.

The union on Monday sent a memo to all employees of banks requesting their feedback.

The memo will be submitted to Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, who said plans by the previous government of Fayez Tarawneh to introduce a two-day weekend were not on the top of his Cabinet's agenda.

"We feel that there are no positive results from the decision," said Zayadin.

The union for weeks tried to lobby the previous government to interfere in order to alter working hours so that bank employees start work at 8:00 a.m. and finish at 3:30 p.m. They also demanded the lunch break be cancelled.

CBJ governor, Ziyad Fariz said last week the bank had no intention of reversing its decision, saying it was made in line with laws and regulations.

"The normal thing is for banks to operate all day and to offer financial services for customers without interruption."

However, Rawabdeh has said talks will be held with the banking sector to overcome differences resulting from the implementation of the new weekend scheme in the financial sector.

House appears set to endorse Illicit Profit Law amendments

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament appear set to endorse controversial amendments in an anti-corruption draft law in a joint session that may be held in a few weeks, deputies told the Jordan Times on Tuesday.

According to Mahmoud Kharabsheh (Balqa), rapporteur of the Lower House Legal Committee, a joint session is likely to be convened at the beginning of April.

Kharabsheh added that he expected only around 20 deputies to vote against amendments introduced by senators that will exclude parliamentarians from the list of public servants required to declare their assets and properties upon taking office under the anti-corruption draft.

The draft, officially titled "Law Against Illicit Profit," has been sitting on the Senate's shelves for seven years due to disagreements between the two Houses.

It was submitted to Parliament by the government in 1990 following a request from the Lower House, but was volleyed back and forth from the Lower to the Upper House, which rejected it twice in the course of two years.

Senators objected to seven articles of the law, including one stipulating that parliamentarians, in addition to ministers and other high-ranking officials, also submit a personal financial assessment upon appointment.

Parliament sources told the Jordan Times that senators appeared to have convinced deputies to scrap the article in question during a "meeting" chaired by Senate Presi-

dent Zeid Rifai and attended by the Legal Affairs Committees of both Houses.

Deputies who attended an informal meeting chaired by Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali earlier this week gave different predictions on the upcoming vote.

'It would be such a shame if deputies exempted themselves from declaring their financial assets and properties... How could they face their constituencies ever again?'

— Mohammad Ouran

Majali told deputies to vote their conscience, but while Kharabsheh expected an overwhelming vote in favour of the Senate's amendments, leftist Mohammad Ouran (Tafilah) expressed hope the Lower House would override them.

"It would be such a shame [if deputies exempted themselves from declaring their financial assets and properties]," said Ouran, who is also the secretary general of the Arab Land Party, on Tuesday. "How could they face their constituencies ever again?"

According to the Constitution, Parliament must

convene in a joint session to discuss drafts that have been rejected twice by either House. Drafts discussed during a joint session can only be enacted by a two-thirds majority vote. Also according to the Constitution, a joint session is convened at the discretion of the Senate President.

The joint session on the anti-corruption draft was initially expected in the convened during next year's ordinary session of Parliament, expected to convene in either October or November. But the decision to extend this year's ordinary session for two months beyond its constitutional end, on March 28, to allow confidence voting on the government of Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, made a joint session possible during the spring.

Thirteen of Jordan's 20 opposition parties gathered in the Higher Committee for Coordination Among Opposition Parties have strongly condemned the House's inclination to exclude itself from the draft, saying the move would be tantamount to a "confession of corruption."

Columnists in the Arabic press have also criticised Parliament members, saying the decision would further weaken already shaky popular confidence in the legislature.

Jordan's biggest political party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), last week issued a fatwa (religious injunction) condemning senators and deputies' plans.

"The decision is a flagrant violation of the principles of justice and equality... and is null and void from a religious point of view," said an IAF statement.

Cultural fests usher in spring

Francophone Days
Parlez vous francaise?

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Ten Arab and European countries will participate in the "Amman Francophone Days 1999" between March 20-23.

Cultural activity during Francophone Days will bring together representatives from several countries within the premises of the new building of the Greater Amman Municipality in Ras Al Ain.

All activities will be in French, and will be translated into Arabic.

The cultural activity aims at underlining the importance of the French language, encouraging students from various Jordanian schools to learn and practise French and foster friendly relations between participants.

The four-day Francophone celebration will include an art competition for elementary school students. Embassies of Francophone countries in Jordan will submit poems in French, translated into Arabic, about their countries.

A committee, made up of representatives of participant countries and headed by a representative from the Ministry of Education, will choose the winners and grant prizes.

Several seminars in French will be held by representatives of participating countries, and various French films will be shown.

There are 52 Francophone countries around the world, and they mark Francophone days each year on March 20. Francophone Days will be held under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah, in cooperation with the Greater Amman Municipality, embassies of participating countries, the Ministry of Education and the French Cultural Centre.

Participants in the "Amman Francophone Days 1999" will include representatives from France, Canada, Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Lebanon and Egypt.

Swedes on stage at the Amman International Theatre Festival

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordanian cultural organisations will team up with the Swedish Drama Institute, the Swedish Institute and the Swedish Museum of Modern Art to organise a month of Swedish cultural activities this month.

Dar Al Funun, the Shoman Foundation and the Amman International Theatre Festival and the Swedish organisations have slated an art exhibition, a retrospective of Ingmar Bergman films and Swedish participation in the Amman International Theatre Festival, starting March 23-April 22.

The art exhibition will be held at Darat Al Funun from March 23 to April 22 and will include the works of two Swedish artists in addition to several lectures. The Ingmar Bergman retrospective will be held at the Shoman Forum from April 6-21. The four films will be subtitled in English.

During the Amman International Theatre Festival from April 8-20, various Swedish theatre activities will take place including the Swedish Backa Theatre Group, lectures, workshops on cartoon making and creative writing. Admission to these activities is also free of charge.

What's Going On

FILM

German film "Das Leben ist eine Baustelle" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

DIALOGUE

Dialogue with Dr. Osama Ghazali, editor-in-chief of Al Siyash magazine, on "The International Political Changes and Their Impact on the Arab World" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Weibdeh, on Wednesday March 24 at 6:30 p.m.

POETRY RECITAL

Lecture by Lebanese poet Abdou Wazin on his experience in composing poems (to be followed by poetry recitals) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Jabal Weibdeh on Sunday March 21 at 6:00 p.m.

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Oman's largest print media marketing company with countrywide distribution network for newspapers and magazine has a vacancy for a dynamic person for the above challenging position. The incumbent should have following qualifications:

- Should be a graduate and fluent in both English and Arabic.
- Have a Minimum 5 years of experience with a Distribution company handling multi-litles in various languages.
- Must be a computer literate
- Should have good inter personal skills and should be able to manage a team of 120 staff consisting of Sales supervisors and Delivery boys.

The job involves a high work load with strict deadlines to meet. Trouble shooting; liaison with Ministries, Principals and Dealers are some of the many demanding functions of this post. This is a profit center managerial position and the incumbent should also develop and implement business strategies and increase profitability.

The package, with would be commensurate with experience, would include a fully expensed company car together with housing allowance, a family medical plan annual family flights home and other benefits.

Applicants from any GCC country would be particularly welcome

To send a relevant C.V. please contact

Navaid Syed, Director
Muscat Consultancy Services
Fax: 00968 - 700124
Email: navaid@tawoos.com

JTA sees \$300m market in West Bank

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Trade Association (JTA) believes Jordan can export to the Palestinian self-rule areas goods worth at least \$300 million annually, but can only do so when Israeli-imposed obstacles to the exchange of goods are removed, said JTA president Kamal Qaqish.

After heading a Jordanian trade delegation to the Palestinian territories, Qaqish said Jordan's annual exports to the PNA territories do not exceed \$25 million, a fraction of Jordan's West Bank export potential.

The \$300 million figure is equal to only 10 per cent of Israeli exports to the Palestinians, added Qaqish. Qaqish said the delegation's visit was positive and said several Palestinian firms signed purchase contracts for Jordanian-made refrigerators, deep freezers, garments, vegetable oil and chemical detergents.

He said representatives of 26 businesses held negotiations with the Palestinian side and also met Palestinian Minister of Economy and Trade Maher Masri. The delegation visited the chambers of commerce in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Birch, Jerusalem and Gaza.

"The Palestinian market is important to Jordan and can absorb a great deal of our products," said Qaqish. He said Masri promised to exert efforts to facilitate the entry of Jordanian goods to the PNA territories.

The Jordanian delegation submitted to Masri a memorandum concerning the exemption of Jordanian goods from transport fees and fees on vehicles entering into the Palestinian territories as reciprocal treatment to Palestinian products entering Jordan.

Exaggerated livestock census may be result of 'several factors'

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — Several factors might have led to initial exaggerated results of a recent livestock census — which estimated Jordanian herds at six million head — double the 1997 count — in a process clouded with allegations of corruption, officials said on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is reported to have suggested that charges of forgery levelled by the Lower House deputies are correct, and has said that he will use the report to expose corruption in government departments, fuelling further allegations of corruption.

"The official report of livestock statistics has not yet reached me. The report exposes corruption in state departments, and not the number of cattle. An official investigation in the matter will be conducted so that those responsible will be tracked down and punished," Rawabdeh told the Lower House in its Sunday session.

The Ministry of Agriculture launched a one-day livestock head count in early March to determine the country's overall herd to help alleviate the suffering of livestock breeders because of the current drought in the Kingdom.

However, unofficial survey results published in local papers showed six million heads of livestock; double the three million counted in the 1997 census.

But Acting Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture Mukhlis Amarin said Tuesday he could not comment on the initial results of the survey because it was not over yet.

"I have to have official results and analysis," he said.

However, Amarin suggested that a possible source of misinterpretation might be the fact that the census was held in March and Jordan's livestock is full of newborn ones that were counted as part of the flock.

"These newborn ones might represent up to 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the total number. In fact this could nearly double the number [of expected livestock]," Amarin explained.

"Normally, the farmer keeps constant the number of his flock, the newborns will be either sold, slaughtered, or kept to exchange with an older [animal]," Amarin said.

The government recently said it would offer breeders interest-free loans to enable them to secure fodder for their regular herds, with loans allocated according to herd size. Additionally, it has promised to provide free veterinary treatment to all livestock, including offspring. However, the government's interest-free loan scheme is not intended to secure fodder for offspring.

The main task of the census was to determine the breeding, not the commercial, livestock of the Kingdom as breeding stock need more care, feed and support, Amarin said.

Livestock owners, although asked to, often did not specify in the questionnaire whether their livestock is for breeding or for trading purposes.

"In the final analysis, the two numbers should be separated and the livestock for trading purposes be excluded from the total amount of livestock in

Jordan," Amarin explained.

Amarin said that during a meeting held at the Higher Committee chaired by Director of the Department of Statistics Hussein Shakhateh, it was stated that 45 per cent of the questionnaires were not filled in properly.

"These forms were sent to the field again last week to be completed properly because we do not have all the information requested in these forms," Amarin said.

"So all we have now is a raw figure that resulted from the direct summing of the numbers given by the various census committees," he added.

Another possible source of error might be the fact that around 200,000 animals were only bred specifically for the Eid Al Adha and included in the census figures, although they are soon to be slaughtered.

There will also be a comparative study between the 1997 and the recent livestock census.

"The computer will separate all those livestock breeders that did not own livestock in 1997 and will make some kind of random count of their livestock in order to verify the matter," Amarin said.

Amarin could not say how many animals have been infected with the foot-and-mouth disease, but said between 20 and 30 areas of infection were registered across the country.

He said 1.25 million animals so far have been vaccinated against the disease and the ministry has ordered another one million doses for further vaccination and follow-up from Turkey.

Serbs pressured to agree to Kosovo peace plan

PARIS (AP) — With ethnic Albanians promising to sign a peace plan for Kosovo, international mediators Tuesday were putting pressure on Yugoslav leaders to agree quickly or face NATO military action.

Ethnic Albanians accepted the deal Monday, keeping a pledge they made to mediators three weeks ago when the first round of talks broke up inconclusively. As the Paris talks went into a second day, it appeared the mediators' strategy was to try to get the Serbs on board rather than have the Albanians sign right away, unilaterally.

Phil Reeker, chief spokesman for the talks, said at midday Tuesday that "small meetings" were being conducted. "Just to see if the Serbs are determined in engaging at all in a process."

Asked if the Serbs were, in fact, engaging, he said he couldn't yet respond. But sources inside the talks, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Serbs were proposing amendments that would limit ethnic Albanian autonomy.

Serb President Milan Milutinovic has dis-

missed the Albanian move, say that unilateral signing doesn't mean anything.

Tuesday, entering the talks, he said: "The Albanians will sign something that doesn't exist, so why (is there) pressure on us?"

The agreement would give the ethnic Albanian majority of Kosovo wide political autonomy, while keeping the province within Serbia's borders. The plan provides for NATO troops to enforce it — something Serb-led Yugoslavia continues to reject.

In a sign of possible discord among the international mediators, the Russian negotiator told Russian reporters Monday night that Moscow never had approved the part of the agreement dealing with military implementation, and claimed they had been drafted behind Russia's back. ITAR-TASS reported.

The five other nations of the Contact Group — the United States, Britain, France, Italy and Germany — say the two parts cannot be separated. The Contact Group has

stressed its unity throughout the talks, and disagreements among its members could make the negotiations even harder. Reeker said that representatives of the Contact Group, who have met in Paris at least twice since Sunday, would meet again in the "next day or two" to assess the progress of the talks. Fighting in Kosovo, a province in Yugoslavia's Republic of Serbia, has killed more than 2,000 people and displaced 300,000 others over the past year. The fighting has picked

up since the first round of talks ended three weeks ago, with the two sides apparently vying for position ahead of a political settlement.

U.N. refugee officials said in Geneva Tuesday that at least 9,000 people have been driven out of their homes since Monday alone. The level of fighting and intensity of displacement is at its highest level since an October ceasefire, UNHCR spokesman Kris Janowski said.

Vedrine said there was no deadline for the latest round of talks, but West-

ern officials have said they will not last more than a few days.

NATO has threatened to bomb Yugoslavia if Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic fails to agree to the peace deal. But the Albanians' refusal to accept the deal during the first round of talks had prevented NATO from doing so.

In Washington, President Bill Clinton said Monday that air strikes are still possible.

"If he (Milosevic) shows intransigence and aggression, I think that from our point of view we would have little option," Clinton said.

The peace agreement does not give the ethnic Albanians a hoped-for referendum on independence and requires them to disarm — a hard decision for them given the ongoing fighting.

"This is not an ideal solution, but peace in Kosovo has a price," said Hashim Thaci, head of the ethnic Albanian delegation and a senior official in the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army.

The 29-year-old rebel attributed the delegation's decision to sign to the "positive mood" in Kosovo political and military groups.

NATO representatives join Kosovo peace talks

PARIS (R) — A delegation from NATO joined the Kosovo peace talks Tuesday to discuss details of the implementation of a possible accord with ethnic Albanian representatives, officials said.

The presence of the NATO team — a civilian, an admiral and a general — could cause controversy since Yugoslavia has adamantly ruled out any role for the Western military alliance in enforcing an autonomy agreement in the Serbian province.

A NATO spokeswoman said the delegation, headed by NATO's director of crisis management and operations, Peter Feith, was invited by France and Britain, co-chairmen of the negotiations to be present during discussion of the implementation.

Their mission was "to assist, provide information and give advice" and to ensure that NATO's planning for peace implementation in Kosovo was in step with the negotiations, she said.

Feith, Admiral Alister Ross, assistant director of operations for NATO's international military staff, and army

General Gunnar Lundberg from Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe were dispatched to Paris Monday.

Western demands, supported by the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo, that NATO must lead any peace-keeping force in the rebel province, are a major sticking point in the talks.

The 19-nation alliance plans to deploy 28,000 soldiers in Kosovo and has already assembled advance elements in neighbouring Macedonia and on ships in the Adriatic Sea.

The Kosovo Albanians announced Monday they were ready to sign the draft accord unconditionally, but Serbian President Milan Milutinovic said the agreement did not exist.

During an inconclusive first round of peace talks in Rambouillet, near Paris, last month, NATO's supreme allied commander in Europe, U.S. General Wesley Clark, flew secretly to France to brief ethnic Albanian delegation leaders in a bid to persuade them to sign the peace accord. Diplomats said the Serb delegates refused to meet him.

Protests continue in Ecuador as World Bank promises aid

QUITO (AFP) — Troops and police were dispatched for a second consecutive day Tuesday to clear away taxis blocking the streets of the capital as protests continued against the government's economic policies.

Meanwhile in Washington, the World Bank promised help bail out the crisis-hit economy.

Quito and other major cities were brought to a standstill by cab drivers protesting massive hikes in fuel prices announced last week as part of a package of austerity measures designed to pull Ecuador from the brink of financial disaster.

The taxi strike won broad support from other transport workers in the capital and other cities and forced the education ministry to close schools throughout the country. As well as Quito, the port city of Guayaquil, Portoviejo, Cuenca, Ambato and Riobamba were paralysed by striking cab drivers.

"We will only return to work when the fuel hike is revoked, because unless that happens we're going to die of hunger," Romulo Teanga, leader of the National Federation of Taxi Drivers, said Monday.

Officials said access to the capital from the north and south had been restored by mid-morning in a peaceful operation.

Interior Minister Vladimir Alvarez said the security operation was con-

ducted with "great care." "What the government wants is dialogue and we will continue to work for that," he told AFP.

"We have cleared some five kilometres of road," another official said. "We have avoided confrontation and did not respond to provocation."

In Washington, the World Bank offered "direct support" for the government in efforts to overcome the country's economic crisis.

"The current economic developments in Ecuador are a source of great concern to us at the World Bank as well as to the entire international community," World Bank President James Wolfensohn said in a statement.

"The World Bank is ready to join in the development of a policy framework for Ecuador, and to provide direct support for the country to work its way out of this crisis, while minimising its impact on the poor."

He said World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Inter-American Development Bank officials were in Ecuador to assist the government in devising a rescue package for the country.

Ecuador's crisis was sparked by the collapse of the sucre following the government decision to float the currency last month. It plunged more than 80 per cent against the dollar

prompting drastic action from the government that included a 174 per cent increase in gasoline and a freeze on withdrawals from bank accounts.

Indigenous people also expressed their opposition to the government by setting up roadblocks of tree trunks and rocks and digging trenches to cut off roads in the Andean provinces of Chimborazo, Cotopaxi, Tungurahua and Pichincha. They said their goal was to stop trucks bringing food and supplies from the countryside to the cities.

Among unpopular government austerity measures was the freeze on withdrawals from bank accounts designed to prevent a run on the banks which went into effect Monday.

Finance Minister Ana Lucia Armijos said Tuesday the freeze affected \$788.5 million in funds but Luis Villacis, the leader of the leftist Popular Front, spearheading protests against austerity measures, said the real figure was closer to \$3 billion.

President Jamil Mahuad, in announcing the measures last week, denied he was protecting banks, saying he wanted to "shield the people from watching the dollar rise and your money fall in value."

The measure had an immediate impact, with the sucre gaining 44 per cent in value against the dollar Monday.



Taxis block a street in Quito on Tuesday. Taxi drivers continue to block Quito streets impeding public and private transportation in protest of a raise in gasoline prices announced last week by President Jamil Mahuad (AP photo)

China, Europe hold human rights talks

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese and European diplomats held talks on human rights Tuesday as China publicly appealed to the European Union (EU) not to condemn Beijing at the United Nations' annual rights forum.

Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Wang Yingfan and aides met for three hours in Beijing with diplomats from Germany, Austria and Finland. Chinese and German embassy officials said.

The outcome was expected to help determine whether the EU will sponsor a motion criticising China at the U.N. Human rights commission's annual session, which begins in Geneva on March 22. That day foreign ministers of the 15 EU nations have agreed to announce their decision, the German

embassy spokesman said. The resolutions criticising China "used to be a serious obstacle in bilateral relations between China and the EU," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi said at a routine briefing Tuesday.

"We hope the EU can proceed from the overall situation of the bilateral relations, value the momentum in the field of human rights, continue its independent policy and not revert to the old road of confrontation," Sun added.

The EU was a staunch supporter of the critical resolutions until two years ago when it opted instead for quieter human rights negotiations with China in the hope of curbing abuses.

The United States did the same last year.

But China's recent jailing

of democracy activists, as well as frustrations over lack of progress in their human rights talks with Beijing, have prompted the United States and European governments to reconsider.

The U.S. Congress has passed statements urging the Clinton administration to back condemnation this year.

Human rights also are expected to be discussed during visits to Europe this week by President Jiang Zemin and Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan.

Jiang leaves Beijing Saturday for a visit to Italy, Switzerland and Austria. Tang left Tuesday for Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Germany. His trip includes the Asia-

Europe meeting of foreign ministers in Berlin on March 28-29.

Italians say Marines have written off cable car case

ROME (AP) — Following the dropping of most charges against a U.S. Marines crewman, Italians appeared resigned Tuesday to the prospect that no American would pay for the ski gondola accident which claimed 20 lives.

In North Carolina Monday, military officials announced that, in view of the court-martial acquittal of the pilot earlier in the month, it was "unreasonable" to go ahead with charges of involuntary manslaughter and negligent homicide against the navigator of the low-flying jet, which sliced a gondola cable last year at an Italian ski resort.

The cable car was sent slamming into mount Cermis, killing all aboard. A top defence ministry

official, Massimo Brutti, said in a radio interview that he had expected the Marines to drop the charges.

But "someone has to be responsible," Brutti said. "We will wait for the investigation to end and for those responsible to be pursued."

"Cermis, case closed," read the front-page headline in La Repubblica daily over its account from the States which began: "For American military justice, the tragedy of Cermis doesn't have any guilty parties."

RAI state radio said with the latest development the cable car affair was "growing ever more shameful." "There are no longer any guilty for Cermis," said leftist daily Unità.

At this point, only lesser charges, related to accusations of obstruction of justice, are left standing against both the pilot and the navigator.

On March 4, Italians blasted the pilot's acquittal on 20 counts of involuntary manslaughter.

Premier Massimo D'Alema, who discussed the acquittal with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington, called the decision "shameful," and warned that the NATO treaty governing the presence of U.S. bases in Italy would be reviewed if no one was found guilty and punished for the cable car crash.

Italian prosecutors are still investigating the conduct of Italian military officials in connection with the tragedy.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Obasanjo's party to contest rigging charges in Nigeria

LAGOS (AFP) — The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of Nigerian President-elect Olusegun Obasanjo will defend him against charges of ballot rigging in last month's presidential poll, a party official said Tuesday. Aniye Okon said the PDP would refute the allegations of ballot rigging and fraud made Monday by former Finance Minister Olu Falae, who filed a legal suit to overturn the results announced on March 1. Okon added that even Falae's supporters were not convinced by the court action. "Within the rank and file of the opposition, there are those who have voice reservations about pursuing this course of action," he said. In a written submission, a copy of which was handed out to journalists, Falae charged Monday that the election was skewed by ballot rigging and that Obasanjo, the declared winner of the poll, was not qualified to contest. Appearing before the appeals court in the federal capital Abuja, Falae named Obasanjo, electoral agency chief Ephraim Akpan, the electoral agency INEC itself, and 57 others as respondents in his petition. He further charged that "there were widespread irregularities throughout the country" that made it "impossible to ascertain what the true wishes of the electorate would have been if the elections had been conducted in accordance with the laws."

Duma to resume Yeltsin impeachment hearing April 15

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian parliament decided Tuesday to resume preliminary hearings into the possible impeachment of President Boris Yeltsin in open session on April 15. Yeltsin, 68, faces calls for his ouster based on five charges including "genocide of the Russian people" and ordering the disastrous 1994-96 Chechen war. The other three counts are: signing a 1991 accord which led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union; ordering troops to shell parliament to resolve a 1993 stand-off with deputies; and allowing the disintegration of the Russian armed forces. The speaker of the state Duma, the lower house, Gennady Seleznyov told reporters Tuesday that a special parliamentary committee had decided to resume the debate on April 15. The exact procedure for the hearing will be decided by parliament faction heads Friday. "Because there are five charges the hearings will probably last longer than one day," Seleznyov said. Analysts say the 1993 constitution, tailor-made for Yeltsin, heavily stacks the process in favour of the incumbent and they remain sceptical that the Duma will be able to muster the necessary two-thirds majority to launch a protracted impeachment process. Some say that the charges could be simply a method of exerting political pressure on the hospitalised Russian leader and score political points with a disenchanted electorate ahead of December's parliamentary elections. Yeltsin's term expires in summer 2000 and he has delegated much of his authority to Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Top Bosnian Croat official seriously hurt in car bomb

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AFP) — A top Bosnian Croat official was seriously hurt in a car bomb explosion which rocked central Sarajevo Tuesday morning. Jozo Leutar, deputy interior minister of the Muslim-Croat Federation, was wounded in the blast shortly before 08:00 a.m. (0700 GMT) as he was being driven along one of the capital's main streets. A hospital source told AFP that he had serious injuries, mainly to the head and face, and was being operated on. According to an official of the main Bosnian Croat HDZ party, Leutar was accompanied by a driver, who was reportedly unscathed, and another unnamed person. U.N. spokeswoman in Sarajevo Kelly Moore said: "I can confirm there was a car bomb explosion at about 0750 (0650 GMT) in downtown Sarajevo. Three people were in the car, one of whom was seriously injured." At the site of the blast on Ali Pasina street was a badly damaged white Golf and a blue Polo with a shattered back windscreen, which belonged to cantonal official Zain Backovic. Backovic told AFP that he had been driving when the bomb went off. "I was on my way to the office, it was around 0750 (0650 GMT). I was with my wife and child, the explosion was horrible... the only thing on my mind was to protect my wife and child," he said. Another eye witness said that he said he saw Leutar being taken from the vehicle. "He was wounded in the legs and head and he was breathing very shallowly," the eye-witness told AFP. The Muslim-Croat Federation is one of post-war Bosnia's two entities, and was set up in 1994.

Kenyan woman may be world's oldest person

IKINU, Kenya (R) — A woman in Kenya's central province could be the oldest person in the world, according to her family, who say she is 143. If the family's claims are to be believed, Njoki Wainaina was born more than 15 years before Livingstone met Stanley. Certainly Njoki, who lives in a village north of Nairobi, looks as though she could be 143, with her wizened face and tiny, birdlike frame. She can no longer see, and can hear only with difficulty, but still manages to command centre stage among her family as she sings songs and recalls scenes from her life. Njoki attributes her long life to God. "Who else could make me live this long? It is God who has made me live," she told Reuters. Her longevity may have been helped by her simple diet, which includes bananas, maize, orange squash and home-brewed beer. And she seems to have got away with her weakness for taking snuff. Italian anthropologist Giovanni Perucci studies ageing among Njoki's ethnic group, the Kikuyu. He has met her several times and said it was possible she was 140 or even older. But since she possesses no birth certificate, Njoki is unlikely ever to be officially recognised as older than Jeanne Calment of France, who died last year at 122.

Russian airliner makes emergency landing after bomb threat

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian airliner made an emergency landing Tuesday after the crew received a bomb threat, an official said. The TU-154, with 10 crew members and 123 passengers aboard, was flying from the northern Russian city of Norilsk to Moscow when the captain was told that a bomb had been planted on the plane, said Marina Ryklyna, an emergency situations ministry spokeswoman. The plane made an emergency landing in Nizhnevartovsk, a city in western Siberia, and everyone on board was safely taken off.



Firefighters survey the scene of an Amtrak passenger train derailment in Bourbonnais, Illinois. Amtrak's City of New Orleans passenger train rammed into a truck loaded with steel at a crossing south of Chicago in a fiery crash (Reuters photo)

Hope dwindles as search for dead goes on at Amtrak derailment site

BOURBONNAIS, Illinois (AP) — Rescue crews climbed through the twisted hulk of an Amtrak train Tuesday, hoping to find survivors after a fiery derailment killed at least 12 people and injured more than 100 others.

"We've removed 12 bodies," Capt. Ed St. Louis of the Bourbonnais Fire Protection District said Tuesday morning, adding that authorities expected to find more bodies.

The New Orleans-bound train with 214 people aboard careened off the tracks Monday night after it slammed into a semitrailer

truck loaded with heavy steel bars at a crossing 80 kilometres south of Chicago. The truck was leaving a nearby Birmingham Steel Co. facility.

"The windows rattled," said Don O'Dell, who lives a block away from the scene and was watching TV when he heard the crash.

"We got up and looked around to see what was going on."

Crew members clambered atop overturned cars and two derailed engines — one was split in half — searching through an eerie, smoky haze for trapped passengers.

Firefighters doused flames on one of the engines and another car.

Alan Ramsey, chief of the fire department in nearby Herscher, said eight cars derailed, with three of them ending up on their sides. Amtrak officials said two engines and 11 cars derailed.

Police chief Joseph Beard said most of the injured were in a sleeper car, which Amtrak officials said was behind the engines and a baggage car. Some of the rescuers peeled off their coats for the victims.

Authorities said 101 people were taken to two hospi-

tals in nearby Kankakee, and at least seven were in critical condition.

One was airlifted to Loyola Medical Centre in suburban Chicago.

The condition of the truck driver wasn't immediately known, Beard said, though the cab of the truck was not struck by the train.

Authorities said they were investigating whether gates and lights — which were flashing after the accident — were working before the collision.

Investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board were also being called to the scene.

World newspaper body calls for Vietnamese writer's release

HANOI (AFP) — The World Association of Newspapers called Tuesday for the immediate release of dissident Vietnamese writer Nguyen Thanh Giang arrested earlier this month.

"This is not the first time Mr. Giang has been harassed for peacefully advocating free expression of opinion in Vietnam," the Paris-based body said in a statement quoting a letter sent by its president, Bengt Braun, to Vietnam's President Tran Duc Luong.

"We respectfully but strongly urge you to order the immediate release of Mr. Giang and to ensure that this writer continues his work unhindered," the letter said.

Giang was arrested on March 4, reportedly for possessing anti-socialist propaganda. Vietnamese authorities have refused to give him whereabouts, saying only he was "arrested for breaking Vietnamese law."

Diplomatic sources say he may be charged with

crimes against national security in violation of Article 82 of the country's criminal code, for "propagandising against the socialist regime." Conviction can carry a prison sentence of 10 to 20 years.

Giang, a respected 63-year-old geologist and intellectual, has openly advocated human rights and multiparty democracy in his writings since 1989.

The U.S. State Department also called for his immediate release, provoking a sharp rebuke from the foreign ministry for "brazen interference into Vietnam's internal affairs."

According to the latest U.S. Human Rights report on Vietnam, the country has up to 150 people in detention for religious or political reasons.

Giang's arrest, coming after the ouster of veteran Communist revolutionary General Tran Do from the party in January, could herald a wider crackdown on dissent, according to diplomats.

3 children charged with murdering old man in Singapore

SINGAPORE (AP) — Two teenaged boys and a 12-year-old girl have been ordered to undergo psychiatric tests after being charged with robbing and murdering a 71-year-old retired noodle-seller, a newspaper reported Tuesday.

Murder by juveniles is extremely rare in Singapore, although the crime rate among youngsters has risen during the past year in the midst of a growing economic crisis.

The boys, aged 14 and 13, and the girl will be tried in high court for a capital crime but cannot be hanged because they are under 18 years old.

They are accused of beating and robbing retired noodle-vendor Teo Sak Loke of 440 Singapore dollars (\$259) around 2:30 or 3 a.m. March 7 in the apartment block where he had lived for 26 years.

Teo, whom neighbours knew as "Uncle Laka" after the noodle dish he used to sell on the streets, was found after dawn and died at Singapore general hospital.

There has been little information published about what led

the police to the children.

Monday, district court judge Tay Swee Keng ordered them to be taken from the children's homes where they have been detained to undergo psychiatric testing and observation by the government's Institute of Mental Health.

They wore shorts, T-shirts and slippers during their March 9 arraignment in district court.

"I did not have the intention of killing this man," the oldest boy told the court through a Malay interpreter.

The oldest boy is the uncle of the younger boy and the girl, who are cousins.

Their parents have not been allowed to visit them, except during their court appearances.

The girl's mother, who has not been identified in order to protect the children's identity, has told local newspapers that the oldest boy is her brother, a school dropout, and the youngest boy is her sister's son.

The girl's mother has been quoted as saying she has two teenaged sons, one in a drug rehabilitation centre and another living at a halfway house.

N. Ireland leaders renew push for peace after lawyer's murder

BELFAST (AFP) —

Northern Ireland politicians pledged Tuesday to renew their efforts for peace after the murder of a prominent Roman Catholic lawyer cast a shadow of violence over the British-ruled province.

Meanwhile, after a night of rioting by Catholic nationalists, the local police appointed an outside police chief from England to head the inquiry into the killing, claimed by a renegade pro-British Protestant armed group.

Gathering in Washington for the annual St. Patrick's Day celebrations at the White House Wednesday, leaders from across the sectarian divide promised the murder of Rosemary Nelson would concentrate their minds.

Leader of the IRA's political wing, Seán Fein, Gerry Adams, told reporters in Atlanta, Georgia: "It's our job to face up to those killings. The killing of Rosemary Nelson has to be an incentive to do what we were elected to do."

Nelson died Monday after a car bomb blew off her legs and a large part of her stom-

ach as she left home in Lurgan, west of Belfast.

First Minister David Trimble, a Protestant, and his moderate Catholic deputy Seamus Mallon also vowed it would not derail efforts to implement in full the Good Friday accord of last year.

"This atrocity has been committed," Trimble said, "by those who wanted to damage the process. It underlines the need for us to ensure that it does not succeed in so doing."

Mallon, appearing with Trimble at a joint news conference in Washington to announce new U.S. investment in the province, said the murder "highlights the need for what we're doing, the need for a peace process, the need for political stability."

"Those who carried out this murder are not going to derail us from the type of decisions we have to make."

The killing, claimed by the Red Hand Defenders, came at a particularly sensitive time for the faltering Northern Ireland peace process.

After nine months of

deadlock over the refusal by paramilitaries to begin handing over their arsenals of guns and explosives, a March 10 deadline for the establishment of a new power-sharing government had to be postponed until April 2.

But despite the personal involvement of U.S. President Bill Clinton, who will Wednesday urge the parties in Northern Ireland to make more progress, there is still no sign of any breakthrough.

Trimble has insisted that the Irish Republican Army (IRA) must begin decommissioning before he allows Sinn Féin to take up its seats in the new Northern Ireland executive.

Sinn Féin points out that the accord stipulates only that disarmament must be finished next year.

The lawyer's murder sparked street clashes in Lurgan as masked demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails and stones at police and army units in riot gear.

Nelson was a leading lawyer working for the Catholic nationalist com-

munity. She had represented several pro-United Ireland republican militants and accused the Protestant-majority police of collusion with loyalist militias.

In a bid to calm the situation, the head of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), Ronnie Flanagan, said the Kent Chief Constable David Phillips would head the inquiry.

He also discussed he had asked the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to help the investigation.

In a statement, Flanagan said he was determined that the inquiry into the murder would not only be "the most meticulous it can be, but will be transparently obvious as such."

Although the main loyalist paramilitaries have proclaimed a ceasefire, two splinter groups opposed to the peace process emerged last year.

One is the Red Hand Defenders, which has killed at least twice before and is based in Portadown. The other is the Orange Volunteers, from Belfast.

At least four killed in Lankan suicide blast

COLOMBO (R) — At least four people were killed and five wounded when a female suicide bomber blew herself up in a suburb of the Sri Lankan capital Colombo Tuesday, police said.

The bomber jumped in front of a car carrying chief inspector Mohammed Nilabdeen of the police terrorist investigation unit, a senior official from a nearby police station told reporters.

Nilabdeen was wounded and has been hospitalised. No details on his condition were immediately available.

As well as the bomber, the dead included a man who swallowed a cyanide capsule when apprehended at the blast site, police said.

W.P. Dayaratne, superintendent of police of the Mount Lavinia division, said some of those wounded were travelling in a bus that was close to the police car.

Police officials say the death toll from the explo-

sion, which occurred near the Mount Lavinia police station, could rise as two of the wounded were critical in hospital.

The blast went off around 5.30 p.m. (1130 GMT) and comes just ahead of a meeting Thursday of foreign ministers of seven south Asian nations in the central hill town of Nuwara Eliya.

Several vehicles were damaged by the explosion. Police cordoned off the area causing traffic chaos in the evening rush hour.

Tuesday's blast follows a spate of bombings in Colombo last week in which one person was killed and 11 injured in three separate late-night explosions.

The government blamed last week's attacks on Tamil Tiger rebels, saying the guerrillas were trying to destabilise the city.

Security has been tightened in Colombo and up to 20 suspects have been

detained following last week's trouble.

In February last year a suicide bomber blew herself up at a military checkpoint in Colombo hours after Britain's Prince Charles left the island after attending independence anniversary celebrations. Nine people were killed.

A month later in March a bus exploded at a busy crossing during the afternoon rush hour killing nearly 40 people.

Since then there have been several small blasts in Colombo, but Tuesday's was the first triggered by a suicide bomber since last year, police said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have been fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east since 1983. Independent reports put the figure of those killed in the war at nearly 55,000.

Malaysia's Anwar asks trial judge to step aside

KUALA LUMPUR (R) —

A lawyer for Malaysia's sacked Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim has asked the judge in the former minister's corruption trial to discharge himself from the case.

Counsel Raja Aziz Addruse filed a motion Monday with the capital's high court supported by an affidavit by Anwar, who said he believed he had not been given a fair trial.

The documents were the latest surprise twists in the 4-month old trial that has exposed divisions in Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's party and stirred political turbulence.

Reuters obtained copies of the motion and affidavit Tuesday.

Neither High Court Judge Augustine Paul, who has presided over the trial since its start in November, nor the court's chief registrar could be reached for comment.

The motion says Augustine "ought not to continue to hear and try the issues and matters in the trial," or alternatively "be required to discharge himself."

A lawyer representing Anwar said that under court

Augustine himself would normally take up the motion.

In his affidavit, Anwar said he had "grave apprehension that the learned judge might not bring an impartial and unprejudiced mind with respect to the issues and matters before him."

He added: "I do not believe I have been given a fair trial." Mahathir sacked Anwar in September after their differences over the economy and politics reached breaking point.

Anwar was later arrested after leading 30,000 anti-government protesters through the capital calling for an end to Mahathir's 17-year rule.

He has pleaded not guilty to five counts each of corruption and sodomy, arguing he was the victim of a conspiracy by high-level associates of Mahathir to end his political career.

Augustine, promoted to the high court bench last May, has ruled that the political conspiracy argument is irrelevant.

In January, he threw out months of evidence relating to allegations of sexual misconduct by Anwar, drawing protests from Anwar's lawyers that the ruling deprived them of a chance to dis-

prove the accusations and clear Anwar's name.

Augustine also accepted the prosecution's amendments to the four corruption charges under examination since November, which had the effect of reducing the government's burden of proof.

Anwar's 16-page affidavit summarised his views of the judge's critical rulings over the course of the 17-week long trial.

The defence closed its case and is to begin summarising on March 23. Defence lawyers expect the judge to deliver a verdict in early April, and say they doubt the prosecution will press the remaining six charges.

Anwar said in his affidavit the judge was precluding the defence from adducing evidence important to establishing its case.

He said the judge had "clearly made a pre-judgement on the issues, precluded my counsel from presenting my case in full, has expunged evidence favourable to me (and) had applied as between the prosecution and the defence different standards with respect to the admissibility of evidence."

'Music courses improve math skills'

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A strong dose of music can boost children's test scores in math, according to a study of Los Angeles elementary school students.

The study released Monday in the journal *Neurological Research* shows that after music-math courses were introduced, second- and third-graders scored 100 per cent higher than their peers at the school who were taught fractions using traditional methods.

The 95th Street School children were taught "spatial temporal reasoning" using musical games along with piano lessons in the experiment conducted by University of California at Irvine researchers.

The researchers believe that their math game, which requires the user to match irregular holes with shapes, helps students visualise abstract math concepts. And the piano lessons, they say, help students hear and feel them.

Seven-year-old Michael Demery said: "I like the music because I learn whole notes, quarter notes and rests ... It helps me to count and do problems in my head."

Spatial temporal reasoning and proportional reasoning are crucial for understanding calculus and geometry, as well as for chemistry, physics, medicine and other sciences.

Researcher Gordon Shaw said more research is needed to determine how music improves higher-level thinking.

He suggested that music, particularly classical music, stimulates the frontal and prefrontal portions of the brain that perform analytical functions, as indicated in studies since the 1980s.

Thailand may deport N. Korean diplomats

BANGKOK (R) — Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai said Tuesday Thailand may deport some North Korean diplomats involved in a bungled attempt to kidnap a former colleague.

Chuan also said legal action would be taken against other North Koreans involved in the bizarre kidnap attempt last week.

"Those who do not have diplomatic immunity will have to face legal action in accordance with Thai law, but for those officials who have the privilege of diplomatic immunity, the practical method is to send them back," Chuan said when asked how Thailand would deal with the case.

Thai police have said they believe seven North Korean agents, four of them bearing diplomatic passports, were involved in an attempt last week to abduct Hong Sung-Gyong, the former number three of the North Korean embassy who went missing last month.

Police said the North Korean embassy accused Hong of embezzling money intended for rice purchases.

Chuan said North Korea was willing to send a delegation to Thailand to try to end the row but he said Thailand was sticking to its demand for the release of Hong's son.

Police say they believe the

seven North Koreans are still holding the son, Hong Sung-Gyong, at the North Korean embassy.

"I insist that the safe release of Mr. Hong is our highest priority and the behaviour of their diplomats will also have to be discussed," Chuan said of the North Korean delegation offer.

The foreign ministry said Monday a letter of "regret" from the North Korean embassy was insufficient redress for the violation of Thailand's sovereignty caused by the abduction attempt.

Police say North Korean agents abducted Hong, his wife and son from a residence on the outskirts of Bangkok last week

and attempted to smuggle them back to the North Korean capital Pyongyang via Laos.

Hong and his wife escaped after the vehicle they were travelling in crashed in northeastern Thailand on March 9, but the son remained in the hands of North Korean agents.

The elder Hong, North Korea's former science and technology councillor in Bangkok, went missing on Feb. 19 and the embassy later accused him of embezzling money intended for rice purchases from Thailand.

According to local news reports, North Korea has failed to pay around \$70 million for Thai rice shipments.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975
جوردين تايمز دورية عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنيةChairman of the Board of Directors
Abdel Salam TarawnehVice Chairman & Director General
Mohammad AmadExecutive Editor
Abdullah HasanatResponsible Editor
Elia NasrallahEditorial and Advertising offices
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

It's the law

THE ROW between Israel and the European Union (EU) over the status of Jerusalem is actually a dispute between the entire international community and the Jewish state. What seemed to have upset Israel of late was the simple and straightforward statement of the EU that under international law, Jerusalem, the whole city of Jerusalem, is a "separate body" from Israel. What the EU has been saying all along is actually a restatement of the obvious. Under U.N. resolution 181, Jerusalem has indeed an international status. In legal theorem, no unilateral or even bilateral agreement to the contrary would stand. Besides under the Oslo accord, the future of Jerusalem is slated for negotiation at the final status stage of peace talks. This much Israel had committed itself to in black and white.

This principled and legal European position was conveyed to Israel by EU ambassadors in Israel in reaction to its persistent efforts to thwart official meetings between EU diplomats and Palestinian officials at Orient House in East Jerusalem. Every time a European emissary arrives in Jerusalem and wants to meet with his Palestinian counterpart, the Israeli government objects in the most vehement and arrogant manner. What adds insult to injury is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's reply to the most recent burst of acrimony over the issue. By calling for a cabinet meeting to adopt a resolution which purports to describe the EU position as "false in fact and from a legal standpoint totally unacceptable," the Israeli leader is trying hard to rewrite international law. The fact that the rest of the global community, including all the major capitals, see the issue differently does not seem to bother Netanyahu at all.

Since the future status of Jerusalem is left for peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, the least that Israel should do is await the conclusion of these projected negotiations before it adopts final positions on the Holy City. And since the 1947 U.N. resolution that partitioned Palestine and established a separate status for Jerusalem still stands, any agreement between the two sides must also be endorsed in due course by the international community through the U.N. General Assembly. That is why Israel must reckon not only with the Palestinian National Authority over the status and future of Jerusalem but also with the entire international community. This is the gist of the EU's repeated messages to Israel on Jerusalem.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Tareq Masarweh, commenting on the Israeli decision to cut water supplies to Jordan, said disregarding any exaggeration it is obvious that the Kingdom's legitimate rights to water from Lake Tiberias has nothing to do with rainy seasons. The 1994 peace treaty does not stipulate an amount of rainfall or that Jordan gets water because Israel is "kind and compassionate," he said. The Israeli position once again underlines the impossibility of establishing peace with Israel and at the same time have bilateral relations over water, trade, transport and security; peace with Israel should be restricted to "non-aggression agreements," argued the writer, adding that although the Kingdom may notify the U.S., it should not take the superpower's stand "seriously." Masarweh said he expects the government to involve and attempt to make the international community recognise the reality of the water situation in the region in order to help find comprehensive solutions.

Al Dustour's Oreib Rimawi said Israeli Water Commissioner Meir Ben Meir's statement to Jordan Water Authority Secretary General Duried Mahasneh are representative of the Jewish state's "true" stand vis-a-vis the Kingdom, unlike statements made by Netanyahu, Sharon or their American allies. Meir claims that his country will not be able to supply Jordan with water this year because of the drought, in violation of all agreements signed between the two countries, said Rimawi. Jordan, facing Israel's "water war against" it, has no choice but to insist on its full share agreed upon in the deal, which is not conditional upon climate and rainfall changes, said Rimawi adding that the Kingdom has the right to use the water in summer after storing this amount in winter. Jordan has received several promises from Netanyahu following the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein, and all it gets is a reduction in its own water supplies, Rimawi concluded.

Washington Watch

An early look at the prospects in 2000

Dr. James J. Zogby

A FEW weeks ago, my brother John (the political pollster) and I were in the Arab World. In almost every discussion we had with governments or business leaders, we were asked our views on the 2000 presidential elections.

One prominent political leader asked John directly: "Who will win in 2000, Bush or Gore?" John's response was simple and direct. "If the election were held today, George W. Bush would win. 'But,' he added, 'the election is not today.' Despite the fact that the election is more than one and a half year away, it is not too early to begin paying attention to this critical contest. The stakes are quite high and the competition is already intense.

Just this week, both Republican Governor George W. Bush of Texas and Republican Elizabeth Dole announced the formation of what are called "exploratory committees" for their expected 2000 candidacies.

Exploratory committees are vehicles that allow individuals to raise money and hire staff and in general, "act like a candidate," while not formally and finally entering the race.

The entry of these two well-known Republican names makes the Republican list of candidates grow to ten. At this point there are only two Democrats running — Vice President Al Gore and former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley.

Among these 12 candidates, the current polling numbers, though early, are both revealing and interesting.

George W. Bush and Elizabeth Dole are, far and away, the leading Republicans. At this point, they are the only two who register in double

digits. Bush is in the 30 per cent range. Mrs. Dole registers between 15-25 per cent. None of the other eight Republicans gets over seven per cent.

On the Democratic side, Vice President Gore scores around 50 per cent with Bill Bradley his lone competitor getting about 15 per cent support.

In match-ups between the leading Republicans and Vice President Gore, both Bush and Dole lead. Bush bests Gore by between 15 to 20 per cent and Dole leads by around ten per cent.

Here's what I believe these early numbers are telling us: Bush and Dole are leading Republicans by such a large margin because these are two of the most prominent and recognised names in American politics. In fact, either a Bush or a Dole has been on the presidential ballot since 1976.

The big question, of course, is: Will Americans support this Bush and this Dole? At present they are not really known. In fact, a leading political analyst couldn't give you more than two sentences. "What voters do feel however, is that Bush and Dole are the preferred candidates of the establishment and they may be moderate enough to lead the Republican Party away from extremism.

Both Bush and Dole have won broad support from party leaders. Bush for example, has won endorsements from one-half of the nation's Republican governors and dozens of the leading elected officials.

But all of this support has been won

on perception, since neither Bush nor Dole has competed nationally nor have they presented issue papers on the controversial issues of the day.

Once they do and are tested, then we will see how real these numbers are. As of now, the high numbers represent a combination of name recognition and a yearning for the party to be more centrist.

Both Bush and Dole can be hurt by positions they take on controversial issues, revelations about their personal lives, or how they react to pressure in the midst of the campaign. Since their current support is, in fact, so hollow, it can be deflated rather quickly.

Such high numbers, this early in the campaign may actually hurt George W. Bush. Too large a lead, early on, may create inflated expectations that are difficult to fulfill.

At present, George W. Bush will be the target for all of his opponents and he will be under rather significant pressure to maintain his leading role.

Gore's numbers are also quite troubling. For the sitting vice president to receive only 50 per cent support against virtually no Democratic opposition, means that he has not yet won the loyalty of the majority of his fellow Democrats.

For just about one-half of the Democrats to want Gore as their nominee means either that there is some unease about his role as party leader or that he has not yet emerged out from under Clinton's shadow and established himself as a strong leader.

The Republican/Democratic match-ups also spell problems for Al Gore. The fact that the vice president is seen as losing to two individuals, neither of

whom are well-known, means that Gore will have to work hard in the next year.

It is, of course, very possible that the vice president can turn this situation around. Gore's advisors are fond of pointing out that in 1987, then Vice President Bush was also losing by similar margins to the then leading Democrat Michael Dukakis and Gary Hart.

Bush, who like Gore, was not known for his charismatic style, emerged out from under the shadow of the charismatic Reagan, ran a strong campaign and won easily in 1988.

During the next few months all of the announced candidates will be engaged in a number of common pursuits. First and foremost, they will be raising money. It is estimated that to compete effectively a candidate will have to raise at least \$20 million this year. Gore has already set a \$55 million goal. On the Republican side billionaire Steve Forbes has indicated that he will spend as much of his own money as he must to win. This means that front-runners like George W. Bush will have to raise big money. And raise it quickly.

Next, the candidates will need to build organisations in Iowa and New Hampshire, the states where the first presidential contest will take place next February. Some candidates, like Lamar Alexander, the former Republican Governor of Tennessee, have long-standing effective organisations in these states. George W. Bush and Mrs. Dole must start from scratch.

Since Iowa and New Hampshire are the nation's first contests, a candidacy

can rise or fall on the outcome of these elections. If a campaign does not finish in at least the top three after Iowa and New Hampshire it will be difficult for that candidate to continue.

If Bush does not do in Iowa or New Hampshire as well as his high poll standings it will be perceived as a weakness and a loss and may well hurt the perception of his candidacy as a winning candidate.

The candidates will continue to work to line up endorsements from party leaders and to build up their campaign teams with advisors and professionals. The candidates will also develop positions on issues and seek to define themes for their campaigns.

Finally, all the candidates will seek to avoid any blunders or misuses that could create the sort of embarrassing press feeding frenzy that could doom their campaigns. In the past, many great candidates were destroyed by such blunders.

So much will happen in the next year. Some candidates may emerge, only to be destroyed by a mistake or press scrutiny. Some new forces may yet appear. It is even possible that a third or fourth party will run, especially if a moderate Republican wins that party's primary and angers its Christian right wing.

It is, in the end, too difficult to predict the outcome of this election still in its infancy. At this point, therefore, my brother John's answer to the question "who will win in 2000?" is the best one. "If the election were held today, George W. Bush would win. But the election is not today."

Letter to the editor

Seven steps to efficient water management

FIRST, I strongly believe that conservative and long-term planning must become more and more important in water policy planning by Jordanian governments. Take for example, the agricultural sector. Since agriculture, in particular, accounts for much of the country's water use, farmers can employ several methods including land levelling, lining of irrigation ditches, use of more efficient pumps, and an emphasis, where practical, on such water-saving systems as drip irrigation. Modern conservative techniques are in a farmer's self-interest for at least a couple of reasons: conservation, once initiated, often results in less work for the grower; and saving water this year in a certain area that draws from a particular reservoir increases next year's allotment.

Second, the current Middle East peace process provides an excellent forum for promoting the cross-border cooperation and coherent planning that the region's water problem needs.

Third, a master plan for studying the water problems for Jordan must be initiated and renewed annually. This strategic plan should include the development of operational and management approaches. Teams of consultants should conduct complex water budgets, groundwater, flood hydrology, pool hydraulics, and operational computer modelling analyses of every major city. A comprehensive plan, as a part of the master plan, should be developed to optimise existing water resources and reduce evaporation by storing water in deep pools with less surface area.

Fourth, use of computerised geographic information systems that combine visual impact with statistical data would produce accurate layers and scaled maps loaded with information on everything. The computer system is fully dynamic; it can model changes in several layers simultaneously and show these changes in flux. Computers could organise millions of facts about municipal water supplies and distribution performance, with a click of a few keyboard keys rather than hours of manual calculations and drafting. Computers would assist in analysing more efficiently and getting more accurate measurement of pressure, flows, and velocities.

One can see everything from average day demands, peak day demands and fire-flow availability — all on contour maps of the city. If one wants to know what the effect would be if the developer used six-inch pipes, one could see it; if one wants to know what the effects would be when required to use nine-inch pipes, one could see that.

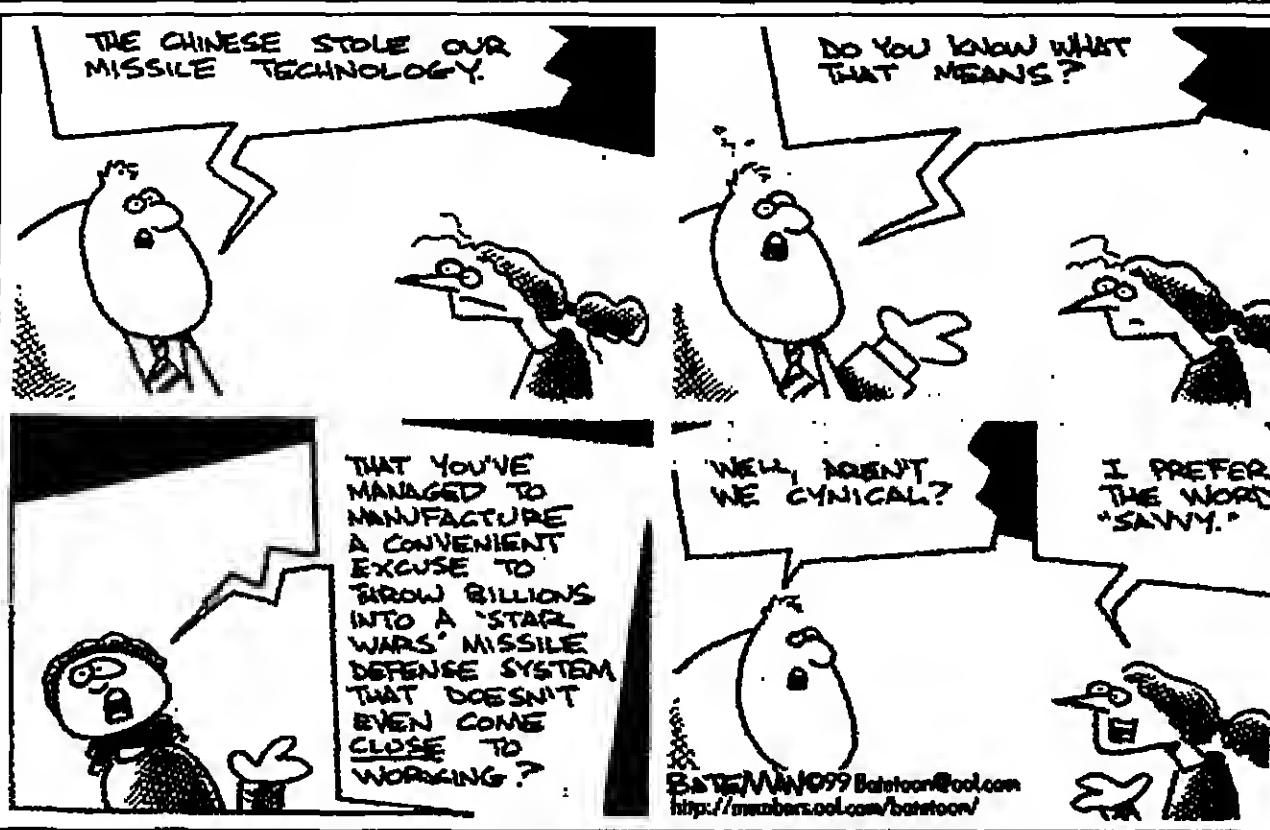
By capturing consumption data in a flexible database, computer technology will enable engineers to get clearer pictures of who — single households, multiple unit dwellings, hospitals, universities, industry — use what amount of water, and thus determine what part of the total water costs they should pay.

Fifth, the need for a new concerted strategy for ensuring effective operations and maintenance is essential. By installing restrictions on all showers and faucets, homeowners can cut their annual in-home water use by 8 to 12 per cent. Drip irrigation systems are the next frontier for water conservation, because they cut water use for yard and garden by 20 to 50 per cent. While computerisation and advanced engineering costs money, the government can probably save money through accurate planning, efficient operations and fairer allocation of water resources and spending.

Sixth, a strong element of current thinking in fighting water shortage is the need for "stakeholder participation" in decision-making. This should involve water users in designing policies and solutions that are more efficient and most likely to last.

Seventh, another key stand is to shift the government away from supply management in their planning. Most possible new water sources are hard to access and very expensive to develop for only a marginal gain. The alternatives to new investment are conservation and better management of existing supplies.

Demand management is now advocated strongly as providing the best chance of achieving conservation through increased efficiency and equity of water use, through regulation and technology and indirect measures to change behaviour such as market mechanisms, financial incentives and public education.

Abdul Salam Al Naser Al Mala
George Mason University

Holy See's concerns over Middle East brought to U.S.

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — While Iranian President Mohammed Khatami was endorsing himself to his Italian and Vatican hosts last week, the Vatican's secretary for relations with states, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, was here making in-roads over the Holy See's concerns in the Middle East, particularly the issue of Jerusalem.

Tauran had a "useful exchange of views" with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Iraq, Iran, Cuba and Kosovo as how a senior U.S. government official, who asked not to be identified, would describe the meeting. Earlier last Wednesday, he also discussed Middle East "developments" with Dennis Ross, the presidential envoy handling the moribund peace process.

Otherwise, the two sides were circumspect and it seems the snow storm in three years in Washington contributed to the cold shoulder the media gave to the distinguished visitor from the Vatican. In public and private appearances the pope envoy had an earful to give on the Holy See's views on the Middle East, which Tauran said, the Pope "love" to call the Holy Land.

In a public address at the Catholic University, Archbishop Tauran came very close to acknowledging Palestinian statehood when he declared that Holy See's "particular interest" in the Middle East was "normal" since it seeks, among other things, "to defend the right of every people to choose freely its own destiny, in accordance with the principle of self-determination."

Archbishop Tauran, a former Papal Nuncio in Beirut in the 1970s, underlined two occasions when the Holy See had demonstrated its "fidelity" to this philosophy of international relations. The first came in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he said, where "each and every" papal intervention had maintained that "every people has the right to dignity, peace and security." He insisted these cannot be secured "by trampling on those of others," which is the reason "why

the Pope, and also the international community, have never accepted, and this still remains true today, the annexation of territory by force."

An "authorised" interpretation of the Vatican's so-called "fundamental agreement" with Israel in 1993 clearly showed, he continued, that "the Holy See has absolutely not abandoned its principles: the peaceful resolution of differences, rejection of the forcible occupation by one of the parties of an area of the city of Jerusalem and the request for an internationally guaranteed statute for the most religious parts of this unique city."

In reply to a question after his address, Archbishop Tauran sharply condemned the Israeli confiscation of identity (residency) cards of hundreds of Arab residents of Jerusalem, calling it "an obvious violation of human rights."

The archbishop took a swipe at some Arab and Palestinian officials who were disappointed with the Holy See's decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994. "If the Palestinians, supported by the Arab World, are seated around the negotiating table, who would blame the Holy See for pursuing a more formal dialogue with the Israeli authorities in order to contribute more effectively to the cause of peace?"

At a meeting he had with Arab Americans and American Muslims, Tauran went a step further in claiming that none of the Arab leaders nor the Muslim clergymen have championed the cause of Jerusalem more than the Pope and urged that they be asked to do more. He also pointed out that some Arab countries still deny Christians working in their country from worshipping at designated public places which he explained need not be churches.

A good section of Tauran's talk at the Catholic University dealt with "the promotion of inter-religious dialogue with Jews and Muslims" in order to contribute to the region's stability. He underlined that "faith in God can only be a source of concord, rather than friction." He added: "All religious fundamentalism," all use of religion

to justify acts of discrimination or violence are perversions of religion and deserve absolute condemnation.

Tauran explained:

"What the Holy See has always tried to make understood to its partners in dialogue is that if God is one, this requires that all should consider themselves brothers. And when you truly experience such brotherhood you are more inclined to benevolence, to helping each other, to respect, to forgive and to cooperate. Believers thus have a special responsibility for peace building. Religious leaders should make one of their main priorities the promotion of an authentic pedagogy for peace."

"Never consider the other person an enemy to attack or someone to convert, instead 'consider the other person a travelling companion, a partner with whom you can build a society and a world in which it is good to live.'"

He acknowledged that "dialogue with Islam has been problematic for various reasons: religious extremism, which is certainly a perversion of Islam but which exists and still continues to this day to cause harm; the interpretation of the concept of 'human rights' within certain Muslim circles has prevented the Muslim World from protecting them in their fullness, despite, for example, a convergence of opinion with Christianity as regards the respect due to human life and the family."

He also said relations between the Holy See and the Jewish world — "above all with the state of Israel — have hardly been helped by the failure to resolve the Palestinian problem, the lack of respect for certain U.N. Security Council resolutions and duly concluded international agreements, without forgetting the annexation by force of a part of the city of Jerusalem."

In short, he added that the Holy Land should be "a sort of workshop for inter-religious dialogue, with Jerusalem, the Holy City par excellence as its symbol."

Whether the Iranian president heard this line or more during his 25-minute meeting with Pope John Paul II remains to be seen but it could not have been much different.

Monday, March 17, 1999
Dr. James J. Z...

Features

Jordan Times, Wednesday, March 17, 1999

7

A country with 30 blank pages of history

Guatemala's Truth Commission has just released its report and it makes harrowing reading. It documents the killings of more than 200,000 people and more than 600 massacres. However, the commission's strong recommendations for change face deep resistance among the army and government, even with an election only months away.

By Graeme Thompson

FOR YEARS Jesus Tecu Osorio was silent about his baby brother's murder.

He was just ten in 1982 when paramilitaries came to his village of Rio Negro, rounded up 70 women and 107 children, and made them climb a 1,300-metre windswept ridge to a small hollow.

There, in the name of rooting out communist subversion — and to make way for a World Bank-sponsored hydro-electric dam — they raped the women, then strangled them one by one.

The children, including Jesus' 18-month-old brother Jaime, were dashed to pieces against rocks and trees. Jesus, and 17 other children, survived. They were kept as slaves for more than three years.

These horrors and thousands more were followed by a silence as deep and still as the lake which now covers the village.

Silence, too, reigned in the case of Edgar Fernando Garcia, an engineering student and union leader in a Guatemala City glass factory. In February 1984, just before a pro-union benefits package was to be signed, he was stopped at a Special Operations Brigade registration post on his lunch break. Detained for looking "suspicious," and sent to a police complex, he has never been seen again.

The silence has now been broken nationally with the release of an executive summary of the report by Guatemala's Commission for the Historical Clarification of Human Rights Abuses and Violence. The U.N.-backed commission puts the

blame for Latin America's longest and cruellest war squarely on the shoulders of Guatemala's military, and the politicians and business interests they backed.

Amid loud cheers and spontaneous applause for justice, and jeers for President Alvaro Arzu, who sat glumly in the National Theatre's front row, Truth Commission coordinator Christian Tomuschat delivered a scathing indictment of 36 years of "extreme cruelty," naked "elimination of political and social opponents," and "strategically planned" genocide against the Mayan people.

More than 200,000 people died, he said, in ways that "none of us could imagine possible." The commission defined 626 incidents as massacres. It also cited 29,000 forced disappearances.

More than 90 per cent of these abuses were committed by the army and state institutions; another three per cent, including 32 massacres, by members of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) guerrilla movement.

That junior officers acted autonomously, and not under orders from above, in committing wanton murder, rape, and torture, is "without substantiation," Tomuschat said.

There was a "deliberate political-military strategy" made "at the highest levels" of both government and URNG to commit these horrible crimes.

The U.S. government, the Central Intelligence Agency, and American business interests were criticised for "maintaining the hierarchy and unjust socio-economic structures" of Guatemala as part of its virulent anti-

"There was a 'deliberate political-military strategy' made 'at the highest levels' of both government and the guerrilla movement to commit these horrible crimes. The U.S. government, the CIA, and American business interests were criticised for 'maintaining the hierarchy and unjust socio-economic structures' of Guatemala [as was] Castro's Cuba"

communist cold war campaign in the 1980s. Fidel Castro's Cuba was likewise condemned for interventionist training of guerrillas.

Amid chants of "First Pinchet, then Rios Montt" — Guatemalan president during the height of the war — the Commission recommended: that the president form a commission to examine military conduct during the war; that the government actively promote exhumations as well as court cases against human rights abusers; that it reveal what happened to the 29,000 disappeared; that memorials be built and the poorest of the victims be aided by government social programmes. A U.N.-backed national commission will oversee implementation of the recommendations.

Despite such strong words, human rights groups and families of the disappeared do not hold out much hope that things will change in Guatemala.

"During the last nearly 15 years we have never had a single answer about the forced disappearances," lamented Emilia Garcia, a founder of the Mutual Support Group (GAM) and mother of Edgar Fernando Garcia.

"In exhumations, the government has never lifted a finger... (They) never said to us they would lend us a car to take us there, or to give us men to dig. Never!"

Carlos Chen Osorio, who lost his whole family in the Rio Negro massacre, shrugs off the Truth Commission. "They only do investigation. They take testimonies and that's it," he said.

Others are cautiously optimistic, like Miguel Angel Albizuza of the Families of the Guatemalan Disappeared. He says the release of the

Truth Commission report may impel civil society to "appropriate the recommendations and mobilise" to pressure the government further. However, he does not see the political will to promote the Truth Commission recommendations, nor the army acknowledging what it did.

In the days since the report's release, there has been an ominous lack of response from the government. President Arzu made a public appearance to open a new road with Defence Minister Hector Barrin Celada at his side. Celada says the army will release its own report of what it suffered during the war. This does not bode well for the report's recommended changes to the military.

This is an election year in Guatemala. Political parties will have to deal with the Truth Commission report in one form or another before November.

Arzu took office in January 1996 with a small majority in an election runoff with the far right Alfonso Portillo. The poll was low.

Juan Carlos Estrada, of the Centre for Human Rights Legal Action, says human rights groups like his will make good use of the commission's data when they get the full report. He said: "In our history there are 30 years of blank pages, which will now be filled."

"People who have had their mouths shut for 30 years can now open them. This is an experience which has never happened in Guatemala: that people can talk about the past. Before, that was taboo."

In Rabinal, where Jesus Tecu Osorio and Carlos Chen live, victims

have done more than talk about the past, waiting for the government to act. After 14 years of silence, their Association of Widows and Orphans of Rabinal Maya-Achi have achieved an impressive array of results in the face of constant threat of death.

They exhumed their families from the mountain-top and built a solid, painted memorial in town — the first of its kind in the country. They were the first to accuse three former paramilitaries of mass murder for their role in the Rio Negro massacre. A court surprisingly condemned them to death in December, and 63 of the 300 families who fled Rio Negro are to move to new land bought by the government, after 17 years.

They also opened a community museum in Rabinal, where Mayan culture and natural medicine is displayed next to graphic exhibits of the massacres.

However, nothing changes easily in Guatemala. Last year, days after releasing the Catholic Church's report on wartime human rights abuses, Bishop Juan Gerardi was brutally murdered. While an indigent, a priest and a German Shepherd have been accused in that case, most believe the military was behind the crime.

The murder, and subsequent quixotic court case, have atrophied the church's plans for implementing its own, similar recommendations for national reconciliation. The Truth Commission report may bring new hope for justice in Guatemala, the Land of Eternal Spring. But it is probably just as well for victims to continue struggling on their own.

— Gemint News

Mobile phones spawn fashion wave in Japan

By Sachiko Kinoshita
Agence France Presse

JAPAN'S COOL young things are leafing through books of music composed especially for their mobile phones, in the latest fashion wave to strike techno lovers here.

With 36.5 per cent of Japan's 125 million people carrying a mobile phone, big business has discovered a lucrative mass market for a new range of products, from stickers and straps to books of ringing-tone music.

One 16-year-old schoolgirl, who gave only her last name Kawaguma, says she frequently has to compose a new ringing tone for her mobile telephone if she is to keep up with the times.

"I change the ringing tone once or twice a month. It's a matter of fashion," said Kawaguma, one of the millions of schoolgirls at the forefront of Japanese trends.

"I'm not interested in making telephone calls," she added.

Futabasha Publishers Ltd. caters for girls like Kawaguma with a series of books containing musical scores for the trendy mobile phone user's ringing-tone.

"Ringing-tone for Cellular Phones, Do Re Mi Book" is a hit.

First published in July last year, the company has since issued eight more editions. It has sold a total of more than four million copies to avid mobile phone users.

The latest edition, for owners of the most up-to-date mobile telephones, retails at 557 yen (\$4.70).

"The melodies are the latest hit songs, really popular music that people prefer when they are singing karaoke," said a Futabasha official. "We don't have any classical or Western music because of copyrights." There is no normal musical score in "Ringing-tone for Cellular Phones, Do Re Mi Book." Instead, the book gives numbers or symbols for users to easily programme their phones.

Yoshichiro Shimoda, a 21-year-old job seeker, says the books are a great

idea. "I think it is crazy for everyone to have same or similar ringing-tone," he told AFP.

Some 44.9 million mobile phones have been sold in Japan, according to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, including cellular phones and so-called handy phones that can be used only near special transmitters.

It's not just the music that can be changed. The small carrying straps can also be swapped as regularly as clothes for prices ranging from 500 yen upwards.

"We have about 150 different types of strap," said the manager of one mobile telephone accessory shop in Tokyo's trendy Shibuya district. "Most of our customers are young girls, they buy several kinds at a time. And if the mobile phone itself isn't cool enough, you can now hand it in to a 'telephone print-shop' which will seal a colourful sticker of the customer's choice to the front and back of the phone."

At one of these shops in Tokyo's fashionable Ginza area, named "Wasn't," an employee reported a "favourable reception, mostly from young women."

"It's cool, I love it," declared Kimiko Hayai, 18, after her mobile phone's makeover.

Not everyone is enthralled with the new fashion.

"I think young people get mobile phones for different reasons to us, we need them for business and communication," said office worker Toshiyuki Tada, 47.

He admitted some surprise at seeing his high-school daughter's mobile telephone strap collection. "Sometimes I'm troubled when I see the latest trends," he said.

Computer software designer Hiroshi Kazuseki, 45, is also unimpressed with today's young mobile phone owners.

"They change the straps and ringing-tone so often. It just depends on their feelings or fashion," he complained. "I have a cellular phone myself but I really don't care about cellular phone accessories."

Tent embassy symbol of Aboriginal struggle

By John Mair
Reuters

BARK-COVERED shelters, slogan-daubed sheds and a fire surrounded by spears sit oddly with the grandeur of Australia's old parliament house and the ordered gardens that surround it.

But the positioning is deliberate. The aboriginal tent embassy is a political reminder that before white settlement of the vast Australian continent in 1788 there was an indigenous race that ruled the land.

The camp was set up on January 27, 1972, the day after the Australia Day holiday which commemorates British settlement in 1788.

Aborigines call Australia Day "Invasion Day." After 27 years, the embassy has become part of the Canberra landscape. It is heritage-listed as a site of special significance and has its own web site (<http://www.aboriginaltentembassy.com.au>) and postal address.

But the political message behind it has never changed, and remains central to the embassy's presence.

"The embassy has always been about sovereignty, the embassy has always been about our right to exist as a people," said Michael Anderson, who helped set it up in 1972.

"It'll stay until we get justice... we will not be moved, no way," Anderson told Reuters on a visit to the site.

Seeking recognition of Aboriginal rights it was a cold and rainy night when the tent embassy was set up, and at the time it was not given much chance of lasting even a few days, Anderson remembers.

"Within three or four days we were absolutely overwhelmed by the fact that the public in Australia really got behind it, and then Aboriginal people from all over the country just came, and the numbers just swelled," he said.

Numbers now vary from "two to 2,000," peaking around Australia Day or for protests against government legislation.

"We try to get into the newspapers by coming here, because we're out of sight, out of mind, everywhere else," Wadjularbinna Nulyarbinna, an elder of the Gungahlin people in the Gulf of Carpentaria, said while sitting at the embassy's "healing fire."

Around the fire, 211 wooden spears stand upright in the ground. Each represents a year of suffering since white settlement, and some carry red ribbons representing spilt aboriginal blood.

The embassy serves as a central point for the Aboriginal population scattered all over Australia, a focus for their call for the rights they say have been stripped away.

"We're captives in our land, there's no other word for it," Wadjularbinna said.

"Who gives someone the right to come into someone's country and take away their identity... all our religious beliefs, our values, our system of law and connectedness to each other and creation," she said.

"Who gives anyone the right to do that to anyone in any country and get away with it?"

The fight for rights goes on when the tent embassy was set up, the push for Aboriginal land rights was just starting.

In the 27 years since, land rights have remained a prominent Aboriginal issue, and the embassy stands as a peaceful and constant reminder that when white settlement occurred Australia was considered to be an empty land.

That meant Aborigines had no rights of ownership to the land they lived on for some 45,000 years and there was no need for settlers to buy land or sign treaties to negotiate access.

The Mabo Decision of 1992 ruled that aborigines had in fact occupied the land, and further gave them rights to seek the return of land owned by the government.

A subsequent case in 1996, known as the Wik Case, established that Aborigines could seek access to millions of acres of government pastures leased to farmers to use it for traditional purposes such as hunting, fishing and ceremonies.

That decision prompted the government's Native Title Amendment Act. Passed last July by one vote after the



Three Aboriginal women elders, (R-L) Gladys Tybingoompa, Jean George and Norma Chevakhon, speak to the media about the Aboriginal land rights reform bill legislation, outside the Federal Parliament House in Canberra (Reuters photo)

longest debate in the parliament's history, the controversial bill cut back the rights won in the Wik Case.

Anyone is free to come and sit around the "healing fire," and hear what the embassy is trying to achieve. There is a steady stream of visitors who call on the old parliament house and walk across the road to the embassy area.

If they look reluctant or apprehensive about coming down to the fire, someone such as Charlie Issacs, a second generation embassy activist, goes out to meet and talk to them.

On Australia Day this year it was revealed the government had revived a 1932 trespass ordinance giving it the

power to remove the embassy.

The embassy is situated on public land, and those around the "healing fire" reject any accusation of trespass, saying that the land was illegally taken away from them.

There is talk of changing the Australian constitution to recognise Aboriginal occupation of the land prior to British settlement in 1788, but that is seen as little more than a token.

"Prior? It's past, present and it's going to be into the future," Wadjularbinna said.

The tent embassy will not be moved as long as Aborigines are denied their rights in their homeland, the protesters say.

"I'll be here until I drop dead," Wadjularbinna said.

Long shot retiree gives U.S. presidential race an original go

By Amy Roe
Agence France Presse

THERE ARE dark horses in the upcoming race for U.S. president, and then there's Ray "Buttercup" Rollinson.

The Gulf Coast retiree and fan of democratic participation has been a self-professed presidential candidate in every election since 1976.

"But I wasn't into it like I am now. Yes, I was running but was I ever very into it? No, I wasn't dead serious," he explains

from his campaign headquarters, Lot Number One at the Sun and Sand trailer court in this tiny Panhandle town.

Now either 77 or 79, depending on the day you ask, Buttercup — who says he likes Ross Perot's Reform Party but isn't a likely frontrunner for its nomination — is finally getting serious about the presidency.

His platform, among other innovations, includes renting out the U.S. armed forces to Germany and Japan — countries he calls freeloader nations — in order to finance U.S. social security

reform.

"It's my destiny," he says.

And you may well be his.

If you're female, single, 18 or older, and a U.S. citizen possessing the sum of \$32 (cash or credit card), that is.

That's all it takes to enter the "American Lady Sweepstakes," Buttercup's fund-raising scheme.

"It's just like getting a lottery ticket," he says.

Only instead of a multi-million-dollar jackpot, the winner will get hitched.

To President Buttercup.

In the White House.

Never mind education, or child care or other "women's issues."

Buttercup, a bespectacled retired systems analyst in an oversized straw hat, is genuinely betting his bridal vision thing will help build a constituency among female voters and the media.

"I tell 'em a couple of things most women like about weddings. They like flowers, ooh, lots of flowers, they like it in the springtime," he said in the thick accent of his native New York.

So he's directed his rambling, hand-

written press releases (entry forms included) to the nation's top female journalists.

"I sent it to gals in Washington in the media; Chris Black, Helen Thomas, Judy Woodruff. I would see their name on TV and they would get one," he said.

And here's the best part: there are no losers in the quest to be Bride of Buttercup. All entrants will automatically receive two tickets, or invitations to the "royal wedding," where he promises there will be champagne and merriment and publicity and even free prizes!

"There's going to be 8,000 bridal gifts given to guests by drawing," he said proudly. (Buttercup's favourite number is eight.) And eight each of the following: Cadillacs, Lincoln Town Cars, and Chrysler LeBarons.

Despite the obvious appeal of White House nuptials, Buttercup isn't expecting to be overwhelmed with entries.

"There'll be some, but they'll be few and far between."

So he's got a lot of work to do, he admits, leaning back in his beach chair and taking a long, leisurely drag off a cigarette.

After all, he says with a grin, publicity — like destiny — isn't free. "Hey, you got \$32?"

Syria faces shrinking economy — U.S. report

BEIRUT (R) — The Syrian economy contracted in the last two years and will face another difficult year in 1999 because of drought and low prices for oil exports, a U.S. report said.

The survey produced this month by the U.S. embassy in Damascus said Syrian official figures showed the gross domestic product shrank 4.4 per cent in 1997. It said non-official indicators pointed to a further fall last year of two per cent to four per cent, with the country registering its first balance of payments deficit since 1989.

It termed the outlook for 1999 and following years "bleak" because rising agricultural production, higher prices and increasing oil production that had driven the economy earlier in the decade were all now in reverse.

Per capita incomes in real terms fell 20 per cent between 1995 and 1997 to \$337, said the report sent to Reuters on Tuesday. The impact of poor economic growth is compounded by a population growth rate of about 3.5 per cent a year.

"Production costs have outstripped world prices for most Syrian agricultural exports," the report said. "Indeed, this year's drought and further slippage of

international prices...may reduce exports to very negligible levels in 1999."

A drought that began late last year could cut wheat production — one-third dependent on rain instead of irrigation — well below average, while the entire barley crop could be wiped out, it said.

The report predicted some farmers would leave land fallow in April instead of planting cotton because of the water shortage.

Oil and cotton exports were the major factors behind earlier Syrian growth.

New gas production, which would free oil for export, may not be enough to compensate for increasing demand at home, low world prices and declining output, the report said. It noted Syrian electricity consumption is rising 10 per cent a year.

"Some predict that Syria may have to begin importing petroleum in the next five to six years, absent significant new discoveries or major investment in enhanced recovery techniques," it said.

"The lack of major new investments today, aside from a large gas recovery project awarded in late 1998, would seem to spell trouble for Syria's critically

important petroleum sector," the report added.

The report warned that the government's reliance on falling oil revenues will mean deferred public investment, which will further curb domestic demand and growth.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, just sworn in for a fifth seven-year term, called last week for unspecified measures to stimulate domestic and foreign investment by amending a 1991 law intended to spur growth.

The U.S. report, however, expressed doubt a government known for its cautious approach to change would take decisive action or that the private sector would feel able or confident to invest.

"We have seen no signs that the government is accelerating reforms," it said.

"Indeed, many in Syria see the worldwide downturn in economic activity, the regime's preoccupation with succession, uncertainties about regional stability...as legitimizing the status quo, rather than opportunities to diversify the economic base away from oil and agriculture and provide jobs for Syria's fast-growing population," the report concluded.

Morocco, Tunisia sign free-trade zone accord

RABAT (R) — Morocco and Tunisia Tuesday signed a free-trade zone agreement, calling for a gradual easing of custom duties on all non-agricultural products, a trade ministry official said.

"Morocco and Tunisia signed an agreement aimed at setting up a free-trade zone by 2007," the official told Reuters.

He said the two North African countries would eliminate, with immediate effect, all duties on around 2,000 industrial and commercial products which carry around 10 per cent customs duty.

Duties on the remaining non-agricultural products would be eased gradually from around 40 per cent to zero by 2007, he added.

The two countries compete directly in citrus, olives and fruits in the European Union (EU), which is their main trading partner.

But the official said the agreement was modelled on accords with the EU as the two countries prepare for a free-trade zone with the EU in 2010.

The accord was signed by trade ministers from both North African countries on the sidelines of a state visit by Tunisian President Zine

Abidine Ben Ali, who arrived in Morocco on Monday to attempt to revive the long-dormant Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

Ben Ali said strong relations between North African countries should precede attempts to reactivate the AMU, set up ten years ago as a political and economic grouping of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania.

But the alliance has never taken off because of tense relations between key members Morocco and Algeria, divided over a long-running Western Sahara dispute.

"We are confident that the next few months will witness the elimination of obstacles that prevented the AMU's march," King Hassan of Morocco said in a speech welcoming Ben Ali on Monday.

In 1998, Tunisia imported Moroccan goods worth 483.7 million dirhams (\$49.86 million) up from 447.0 million dirhams in 1997.

Exports also rose to 380.3 million dirhams from 304.1 million the previous year, official figures showed.

Morocco has similar free-trade zone agreements with Jordan and Egypt.

United States, Israel sign antitrust cooperation pact

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and Israel will cooperate against price-fixing and other illegal monopoly trade practices in both countries, Attorney General Janet Reno and Israel's trade minister said Monday.

An antitrust cooperation pact will make it easier for the Justice Department and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to work alongside Israeli counterparts to protect consumers, Reno said.

Although antimonopoly laws have been on the books for decades in Israel, true consumer protection enforcement is a fairly new idea, the Israeli minister, Natan Sharansky, said at a Justice Department signing ceremony.

His trade and industry ministry usually is regarded as an advocate for business, Sharansky said, but "it is often forgotten... that the job of the ministry is also to stand up for the rights of

the consumer."

The agreement will mean both countries share non-confidential antitrust information and evidence, Justice Department antitrust chief, Joel Klein, said.

FTC Chairman Robert Pitofsky also signed the agreement, the first for Israel and the fifth for the United States. Other U.S. trade enforcement agreements are with Canada, Australia, Germany and the European Union.

Exchange Rates Tuesday, 16-03-99

CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	SAUDI RYAL	U.A.E. DIRHAM	BAHRAIN D.	QATAR RYAL	OMAN RYAL	YEMEN RYAL	EGYPT POUND	LIBYAN D.	ISRAELI S.	IRANIAN R.	AFGHAN A.	PAKISTANI R.	INDIAN R.	RUSSIAN R.	UK POUND	EURO	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.6387	0.1945	2.3236	0.2077	0.7080									
SAUDI RYAL	5.2975	1.0000	1.0208	9.9472	9.7406	1.0301	12.3052	1.1005	3.7506									
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1893	0.9798	1.0000	9.7471	9.5416	1.0091	12.0578	1.0781	3.6740									
BAHRAIN D.	0.3236	0.1026	0.1026	1.0000	0.9792	1.0036	1.2374	0.1106	0.3771									
QATAR RYAL	0.3439	0.1027	0.1026	1.0212	1.0000	1.0058	1.2637	0.1130	0.3851									
OMAN RYAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9910	8.6565	8.4559	1.0000	11.9495	1.0684	3.6418									
YEMEN RYAL	4.3004	0.9812	0.9829	8.0881	0.7913	0.9837	1.0306	0.0864	0.3047									
EGYPT POUND	4.8138	0.9087	0.9276	8.0386	8.8008	0.9350	11.8468	1.0320	3.4080									
LIBYAN D.	21.2288	4.0074	4.0509	38.6621	38.6621	4.1290	49.5272	4.2102	15.0000									
ISRAELI S.	1.4124	0.2688	0.2722	2.6522	2.5971	0.2746	3.2819	0.2934	1.0000									
IRANIAN R.	0.8717	0.1845	0.1880	1.6357	1.6027	0.1695	2.0254	0.1811	0.6171									
AFGHAN A.	2.5439	0.4902	0.4902	4.7788	4.8776	0.4947	5.9111	0.5285	1.8011									
PAKISTANI R.	2.0780	0.3923	0.4004	3.9019	3.8208	0.4041	4.8284	0.4317	1.4712									
INDIAN R.	8.3318	1.6105	1.6441	16.0202	15.6873	1.6590	19.8241	1.7724	6.0044									
RUSSIAN R.	1.6844	0.3142	0.3207	3.1253	3.0604	0.3256	3.9874	0.3458	1.1784									
UK POUND	2.8882	0.5411	0.5523	5.3852	5.2702	0.5573	6.8562	0.5955	2.0293									
EURO	11.6247	2.1844	2.2401	21.8281	21.3746	2.2605	27.0112	2.4153	8.2303									
US DOLLAR	25.1840	4.7541	4.8533	47.2906	46.3080	4.8973	58.5195	5.2321	17.8300									
FRANCE FRANC	52.4703	9.9046	10.1113	98.5284	96.4784	10.2030	121.9199	12.9005	37.1400									
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2802	0.4248	0.4336	4.2252	4.1374	0.4375	5.2285	0.4879	1.5931									
SWITZERLAND FRANC	4.1835	0.7897	0.8062	7.8555	7.6922	0.8135	9.7237	0.8921	2.9519									
GERMANY MARK	0.7463	0.1413	0.1442	1.4081	1.3759	0.1456	1.7384	0.1555	0.5036									
CYPRUS POUND	2.0780	0.3923	0.4004	3.9019	3.8208	0.4041	4.8284	0.4317	1.4712									
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.8989	3.3784	3.4485	33.6056	32.9074	3.4801	41.5952	3.7180	12.8710									
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1598	0.4077	0.4162	4.0552	3.9709	0.4199	5.0181	0.4497	1.5280									
EURO	1.2996	0.2453	0.2504	2.4403	2.3895	0.2527	3.0195	0.2700	0.9201									

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	GERMANY MARK	FRANCE FRANC	YEMEN RYAL	OMAN RYAL	QATAR RYAL	BAHRAIN D.	SAUDI RYAL	U.A.E. DIRHAM	LIBYAN D.	ISRAELI S.	IRANIAN R.	AFGHAN A.	PAKISTANI R.	INDIAN R.	RUSSIAN R.	UK POUND	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6204	0.5552	0.6757	0.1856	0.5496	0.4928	5.9862	1.0680									
GERMANY MARK	0.6142	1.0000	0.6165	0.1022	0.5237	0.3041	3.4816	0.6707	1.0707									
FRANCE FRANC	1.8011	1.6105	1.0000	1.2242	0.2982	1.5284	0.6875	10.1016	1.9574									
YEMEN RYAL	1.4124	2.1844	0.8168	1.0000	0.2436	1.2485	0.7250	8.2303	1.5880									
OMAN RYAL	5.0404	9.7879	3.3537	4.1058	1.0000	5.1259	2.9766	33.8780	6.5647									
QATAR RYAL	117.8400	190.8479	65.4267	80.0979	19.5096	1.0000	59.0693	680.8752	128.0965									
BAHRAIN D.	2.0293	3.2883	1.1267	1.3794	0.3360	1.7221	1.1388	2.2054	2.2054									
SAUDI RYAL	8.2303	13.3364	4.6996	5.5943	1.3625	5.9843	4.0557	48.1575	9.8447									
U.A.E. DIRHAM	17.8989	28.8832	9.9000	12.9005	15.1314	7.7897	1.0000	10.3736	10.3736									
LIBYAN D.	37.1400	60.1962	20.6257	25.2509	6.1501	31.5248	18.3063	203.3406	40.7334									
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5631	2.5815	0.8845	1.0829	0.2637	1.3519	0.7851	8.9348	1.7341									
SWITZERLAND FRANC	2.9815	4.7995	1.6445	2.0133	0.4503	2.5135	1.4566	16.8111	3.2190									
CYPRUS POUND	0.5298	0.8565	0.2842	0.3501	0.0877	0.4496	0.2611	2.9732	0.5788									
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.6710	20.5321	7.0351	8.6127	2.0977	10.7527	6.2440	71.3622	13.7708									
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5290	2.4776	0.8498	1.0080	0.2531	1.2976	0.7535	8.5787	1.6817									
EURO	0.9201	1.4910	0.5109	0.6254	0.1523	0.7806	0.4534	5.1623	1.0000									

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR	5 YEAR
US DOLLAR	4.9000	4.9000	4.7500	5.0000	5.0000
GERMANY MARK	3.3000	3.3000	3.1500	3.4000	3.4000
FRANCE FRANC	3.0000	3.0000	2.8500	3.1000	3.1000
YEMEN RYAL	1.0000	1.0000	0.9000	1.1000	1.1000
OMAN RYAL	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
QATAR RYAL	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
BAHRAIN D.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
SAUDI RYAL	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
U.A.E. DIRHAM	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
LIBYAN D.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
ISRAELI S.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
IRANIAN R.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
AFGHAN A.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
PAKISTANI R.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
INDIAN R.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
RUSSIAN R.	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
UK POUND	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
EURO	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

CURRENCY	ASK	BID
US DOLLAR	1.7042	0.7102
GERMANY MARK	1.1436	1.1514
FRANCE FRANC	0.3520	0.3606
YEMEN RYAL	0.4504	0.4422
OMAN RYAL	0.1199	0.1175
QATAR RYAL	0.6000	0.6000
BAHRAIN D.	0.3479	0.3496
SAUDI RYAL	0.0360	0.0360
U.A.E. DIRHAM	0.7686	0.7705

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS		
FRANKFURT	DAX	5029.24	5008.16	21.08	METAL	ASK	BID
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10801.76	10801.76	35.10	GOLD	286.50	287.20
LONDON	FT-SE 100	6202.60	6202.20	-70.40	SILVER	5.08	5.10
NEW YORK	DJ INDUS.	8956.77	8976.30	19.53	PLATINUM	363.50	365.50
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	615.22	611.54	-3.68			
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	720.91	721.21	0.30			
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1307.26	1294.59	-12.67			
TOKYO	Nikkei-225	16072.82	15779.60	-293.22			
	CAC 40	4185.12	4175.93	-9.19			

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan enters detailed, deep negotiations to join World Trade Organisation

**** JORDAN STANDS** among the countries that are strongly recommended to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) this year according to an analysis by the WTO secretary, said Mohammed Halaqah, secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the head of the Jordanian delegation negotiating the Kingdom's entry into the WTO. He added that the organisation praised Jordan's two "offers" on products and services, which were presented during the first round of bilateral negotiations, for being comprehensive and clear.

The Jordan delegation on Saturday completed the first round of bilateral negotiations during which the Kingdom presented the documents that showed the customs ceiling on imported products which it should be committed not to exceed in the future. Halaqah said Jordan presented the services and documents that show the openness in various sectors in accordance with the laws and regulations in force. The delegation also elaborated on the sectors that are partially blocked to foreign investors due to legislation in force or specific economic measures.

"This round of bilateral negotiations aims at arriving at bilateral agreements with countries concerned about services and products before the multilateral discussions scheduled for next month," he said noting that the bilateral negotiations should simplify negotiations with the multilateral parties. Halaqah indicated that the first round of bilateral negotiations was more detailed and in-depth in contrast to other rounds which took the shape of explaining economic legislation and a review of what has been accomplished.

He said the bilateral negotiations were not

easy as each country submitted a specific list of products and services and demanded a reduction in customs on several products that will be exported to Jordan in the future. Also requested, was that Jordan open some service sectors to foreign investments.

Halaqah said he gave a detailed explanation about the dimensions of the offers and the Jordanian economic philosophy which is based on the principle of gradual liberalisation to safeguard the development process and avoid any social or economic imbalance. "Some countries mentioned the importance of lowering the customs ceiling on some industrial products," Halaqah said adding that such a point was not acceptable to Jordan due to the difficulty of implementing it at this stage taking into consideration the financial dimension of revenues to the treasury and giving the industries ample time to fall in harmony with the requirements of globalisation.

The secretary general said some countries asked Jordan to open the sectors of financial services, banking, insurance, communications and trade but the Jordanian side stressed the gradual liberalisation and that the Kingdom cannot open all these sectors all at once because that will result in major imbalances whose consequences the Jordanian citizen cannot bear. He indicated in this regard that the Jordanian market is small, unemployment is high and the small-size industries cannot face direct liberalisation.

Halaqah concluded by saying some countries understood and supported the Jordanian position while others demanded an acceptable time frame for the gradual liberalisation (Al Ra'i & Al Dustour).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're a very creative person, especially now. You might feel almost compelled to be creative, in fact. You've been thinking about doing something colourful for quite a while, and the conditions are perfect right now. Don't wait any longer.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You need to get your planning, hoping and dreaming out of the way as quickly as possible. You'll have to be in the action phase sooner than you expected. Get your flight plan figured out so, if you have to wing it, at least you'll know where you're going.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) All is not as it appears to be. Well, that's not much of a comfort. Here you are, trying to figure out what's going on, and what you learn is that it's probably no what you think it is. That could turn out to your advantage, however, so stay alert.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Today you may find yourself out beyond your safety zone, almost by accident. You're probably asking yourself how did you get here, anyway. Well, something probably enticed you, seduced you, hypnotised you, or all of the above. If any of that is happening, relax. It looks like a good time for it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Looks like a hassle is just about talked through by now, although you may feel as though you've been going around in circles. You've probably been ferreting out the truth, and that's not always easy to do. If you have, congratulations. Your relationship with the people involved will be stronger.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A partnership formed now could be exciting, creative and even quite lucrative. It'll be hard to know what to expect next, however. Even if you develop a routine, it'll be hard to stick to it. No problem. You can always develop a new one.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Try to keep yourself from getting too emotional or too excited today. A rumour you hear may be just that, a rumour, and not even true. Don't go racing off and getting yourself all upset until you get further proof. Reporters need to corroborate a story from three different sources, remember? You can do that too, and you should.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You'll probably be in a very good mood today, until a co-worker refuses to go along with your suggestion. This might even be someone who's working for you, which is even more irritating. Instead of getting cranky, be patient. You can outwait this rebellion.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Looks like you're finally fixing things up the way you want them to be, and the way the person who shares your environment wants them to be, too. This is kind of an awkward situation, since your tastes differ, but don't spend all day quarrelling about it. Get it done so you can go do something else.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Position yourself for a stroke of genius today. That means you should get in a place where it's most likely to happen. If you study best in the middle of a chaotic environment, that's where you should be. If you need a quiet library setting, then scoot yourself over there. You're apt to come up with something marvellous.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Money is not your major concern today, although it does look like what you're doing could generate some. You seem more concerned with competition. Perhaps you've got an argument going with a person you find mildly threatening. Don't focus on that. It's a waste of time. Be creative, instead.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A lucky break could definitely be in your favour today. It could make more money come into your account, too. It's probably not the lottery; more likely, it's an older person's generosity. You may have thought this person didn't even like you, but you were sure wrong about that!

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Dow drops after 10,000 score

NEW YORK (R) — The Dow Jones industrial average crossed the 10,000-point milestone for the first time ever on Tuesday, but soon turned lower as a bond rally pushed long-term interest rates below 5.5 per cent.

By afternoon, the Dow was off 4.99 points, or 0.04 per cent, at 9,953.78, as investors took profits after the index briefly rose to 10,001.12 at mid-morning.

The market's euphoria was short-lived as bond yields became more attractive and analysts noted that the Dow's rise was fuelled by a small number of stocks.

In the broader market, declining issues outpaced advances by a 16-to-11 margin.

The broad-based Standard & Poor's 500-stock index edged down 0.45 to 1,306.81.

"It is good to get all this excitement out of the way early and get

back to business," said one senior equities trader who requested anonymity.

Still, at least one influential market watcher believes the market, over the long-term, has plenty of ground to cover before peaking.

"We're in a new bull market. This could be the start of a 'mega-market' lasting 12 to 15 years, similar to the boom markets that followed the World War I & II," Ralph Acampora, Prudential Securities' chief technical analyst, said.

Technology stocks remained strong, lifting the NASDAQ composite index 6.60 points, or 0.27 per cent, to 2,438.04.

"Technology stocks are ramping up," said Bill Meehan, chief market strategist at Cantor Fitzgerald.

"Technically, the 10,000 mark is nothing impor-

tant, but psychologically it's important because it's not every day that you add a digit to the Dow."

The Dow's rise to 10,000 capped an unprecedented 4-1/2 year show of force in which the world's most closely-watched stock market index surged 6,000 points.

Favourable earnings news helped the Dow hit the historic mark on Tuesday.

The Dow breached 9,000 in April 1998, but stalled, and later entered a severe decline as worries over the spread of a global economic crisis reached a fever pitch.

But after a head-spinning drop below 7,500 in September and then again in October, the market proved its resilience, surging to 10,000 in a little over five months.

The dramatic rise was helped in part by the

Federal Reserve's move late last year to cut interest rates three times in a bid to keep the super-charged U.S. economy from being dragged down by the economic crisis in Asia, Russia and Latin America.

The Dow has surged as the economy expanded at a record pace with corporate earnings more than doubling in the past decade.

Healthy corporate profits have spurred companies to invest more cash in new plants and equipment, which in turn has fuelled productivity gains and created even stronger earnings.

The great market story has also been fuelled by an unprecedented flood of cash into stock mutual funds.

Renault plans \$5b Nissan tie

PARIS (R) — French car maker Renault bid Tuesday for a controlling stake of Japan's Nissan in a \$5.3 billion deal to create the world's fourth-largest auto group.

Renault and sources close to the talks said Tuesday. The deal would provide management and financial support for ailing Nissan, and enable Renault to break into the Asian and U.S. markets using the larger Japanese company's under-utilised factories and dealer networks.

Auto analysts say the well-flagged alliance is strategically shrewd but risky for Renault, which is taking up a challenge that looked daunting to DaimlerChrysler in order to get into a global alliance as a senior partner.

Together, Renault and Nissan would be the fourth-largest group in output, ahead of Volkswagen and DaimlerChrysler and behind General Motors, Ford and Toyota.

"Renault is now convinced of the merits of a strategic alliance between Renault and Nissan," the company said in a statement issued after a board meeting.

"Renault proposes to Nissan to embark on exclusive negotiations on the terms of this alliance which would entail the purchase of a stake of about 35 per cent in Nissan's capital," the company said.

Nissan's U.S. subsidiary said in a statement that it was "positive" about the

offer and had agreed to negotiate terms exclusively with Renault. It expected the deal by end-March.

"We expect the alliance that Renault has proposed will enable us to complement each other and create synergies," it said.

French union sources said the deal, involving both Nissan Motors and its Nissan Diesel subsidiary, was worth 32 billion francs, or \$5.3 billion — well over the \$3 billion price tag estimated for the purchase of a one-third stake in Nissan.

The socialist-led CFDT union expressed strong reservations about the alliance, saying in a statement that "Nissan's colossal debt could drag a partner into the abyss."

Investors have also been edgy since DaimlerChrysler broke off its discussions with Nissan last week, leaving Renault as the sole declared candidate for Japan's number two carmaker.

Renault's stock slid on worries about its potential exposure to Nissan's debts of \$17 billion, not counting financial services. The stock closed down 5.45 per cent to 33.47 euros.

Under Japanese rules, an investor holding 33.4 to 50 per cent of a group has veto power on the board but is not exposed to claims on its assets from the Japanese company's creditors.

Ford has a similar deal with Mazda. It owns 33.4 per cent and has appointed the chairman.

But many analysts,

mindful of BMW's difficulties with its British Rover acquisition, remain sceptical.

"You know the saying, 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' There's a bit of an interpretation that says, if DaimlerChrysler fears to do this, there must be something horrible in Nissan," said J.P. Morgan analyst Nick Snee.

But he said Daimler may have felt it was already stretched with the recent Chrysler acquisition, and its decision to pull away from Nissan did not make it a bad deal for Renault.

"The industrial logic is quite strong. The Renault-Nissan combination would create a \$95 billion grouping in sales," said auto analyst John Lawson at Salomon Smith Barney.

"At the simplest level, it addresses the most common objection that investors have had to Renault, that it lacks critical global mass," he said. Renault generates more than 80 per cent of its turnover in western Europe.

"From the perspective of complementary market geography and broadened product footprint, it could bring advantages to both parties," Lawson said. "Our main concern is the extent of balance sheet exposure that Nissan carries with it."

Sources close to the talks say Renault's board, including government officials representing the state's 44 per cent stake, approved the offer.

A.S.E TRADE ACCESS 4646868 Tuesday, 16-03-99

Company	Price	Change
BANKS		
ARAB BK	221.000	+0.45%
NTL BK	1.420	+1.41%
THE HOUSING BK	2.810	-0.35%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.550	0.00%
JO. GULF BK	0.680	-1.52%
ARAB JO. INVS. BK	2.200	+4.55%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.470	+0.60%
BEIT ELMAL	0.580	-1.52%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.520	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	287.670	POINT = +0.35%
SERVICES		
ELECTRIC POWER	1.650	+0.61%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.890	+2.25%
AL RAI	7.060	0.00%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS. & ED	1.920	+0.52%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.080	-1.83%
SERVICES INDEX	113.390	POINT = +0.22%
INDUSTRY		
CEMENT	3.680	+0.27%
PHOSPHATE	2.260	-0.89%
ARAB POTASH	4.200	+1.90%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	6.800	-0.28%
JO. YANING	6.500	0.00%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.000	-0.33%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.500	-0.67%
NTL STEEL	0.590	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	6.090	+0.16%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.550	+1.82%
JO. STEEL	1.000	-1.00%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.400	0.00%
NTL IND	0.350	0.00%
PETRO-CHEMICAL	0.260	-3.85%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.830	-1.08%
NTL CABLE	0.490	+2.04%
SULPHO-CHEMICALS	0.410	+2.44%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.270	-3.15%
KAWTHER	0.600	+4.44%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.460	0.00%
IND. RESOURCES	0.420	-2.38%
NEW CAPLES	0.580	+1.72%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.800	-1.25%
INDUSTRY INDEX	96.330	POINT = +0.58%
PARALLEL		
EXPORT BK 752	0.950	0.00%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.410	0.00%
JO. INTL. INS	0.710	-2.82%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0.520	-3.85%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.630	-3.77%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.470	+4.26%
AL DAWLAH	0.700	-1.43%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.080	-2.79%
ARAB INTL. TRADE	0.180	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.330	0.00%
NAMICO	0.140	+7.14%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR	0.580	0.00%
AL RAZI	0.490	0.00%
UNITED ENG. IND	0.210	0.00%
NTL CERAMIC	0.380	0.00%
PEARL	0.420	-4.76%
NTL POULTRY	0.550	0.00%
MULTI DAW	0.750	-1.33%
GRAND INDEX	182.89	POINT = +0.40%

Cathay Pacific reports first full year loss since 1963

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. has announced a net loss of \$542 million (\$70 million) for 1998 — the first time it slipped into the red in 35 years.

Cathay said the results reflected the full impact of the Asian financial crisis, widespread economic weakness and low passenger loads and yields.

Turnover was down 12.9 per cent to 26.69 billion Hong Kong dollars. Cathay made a profit of \$1.69 billion in 1997. The 1998 loss was its first since 1963. "1998 will stand out as one of the most difficult years in the history of Cathay Pacific, as the severe conditions of the Asian economies took a heavy toll on many of our key markets," Cathay chairman Peter Sutch said. Sutch said the year ahead also appeared set to be tough, but added with the airline's investment in Hong Kong's new airport now in place, he looked to the future with confidence. A Cathay official said business class travel had been hit particularly hard, resulting in a bigger drop in yields than in passenger load factors.

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

DAJANI JEWELLERS

"What a difference"

Amra Forum Hotel Amman

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale

Furnished & Unfurnished

For more information call:

Abdoun Real Estate

5920605/5920609/078530007

Web Site is

www.abdoun.com.jo

STUDIO HAIG

Professional quality in 1 hour service

Develop your colour film at our shop and get:

* JUMBO photo size 30% larger.

* Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm.

Shmeisani - Opposite Grindlays Bank.

Phone: 5604042

Sweifeh Tel: 822891

Your Address In Amman

CRYSTAL

Quality Serviced Suites

* One & Two Bedrooms * Fully Equipped Kitchens * Daily & Long Stay * Reasonable Rates

5th Circle

Tel: 5692672 - Fax: 5674551

e-mail: crystal@go.com.jo

FOR RENT

Deluxe Villas and Apartments

SANABEL

Real Estate

SWEIFIYEH

A Hajarat Complex

Tel: 5864230 - 5865167

Mobile: 079/537588

Budget

Car Rental & Leasing

WE RENT LESS

DAILY

WEEKLY

MONTHLY

Telephone: 962-6-5698131

Fax: 962-6-5673312

P.O.Box: 980486

Amman-11196, Jordan

E-mail: budget@go.com.jo

An Independent Budget system Licensee

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL

5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42

&

Fax: 5693337

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL

5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42

&

Fax: 5696183

Bayerischer Hof

German Restaurant

LUNCH: 12:30p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

DINNER: 6:30p.m. - 11:30 p.m.

German coffee and cakes served all day

Sweifeh - Al Hamra Street Tel: 5819730 / 5810811

PO Box 6555, Amman-11118 Jordan.

Amra Forum Hotel

At 6th Circle Tel: 5510001

Shehrazad Restaurant

Over Amman by Night at the Amra Roof Top Restaurant.

your Friendly Host

Reeling IOC braces for 'bloody Wednesday'

LAUSANNE (AFP) — The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is bracing itself for the most traumatic meeting in its history when six members are expected to be expelled for corruption here on Wednesday.

The once-pristine image of the IOC has been severely tarnished by the scandal which exploded late last year.

A gravy train of gifts and cash for votes has left the movement reeling and top officials know that Wednesday's blood-letting will almost certainly not be the end of the affair.

Even vice-president Dick Pound, who led the six-man inquiry into the Salt Lake City scandal admits that it would be unrealistic to believe that the Utah City was the only bidding city to be involved in bribery.

"There is probably more stuff out there," he said.

The six IOC members recommended for expulsion are Agustin Arroyo of Ecuador, General Zein Abidin Ahmed of the Sudan, Congo's Jean Claude Ganga, Mali's Lamine Keita, Chile's Sergio Santander Fantini and Paul Wallwork of Samoa.

Senior IOC officials believe that one of the six may escape.

Their expulsion will only be confirmed if two-thirds of the special general assembly vote to throw them out. With several members unable to attend, only 91 members will be here to act as jurors.

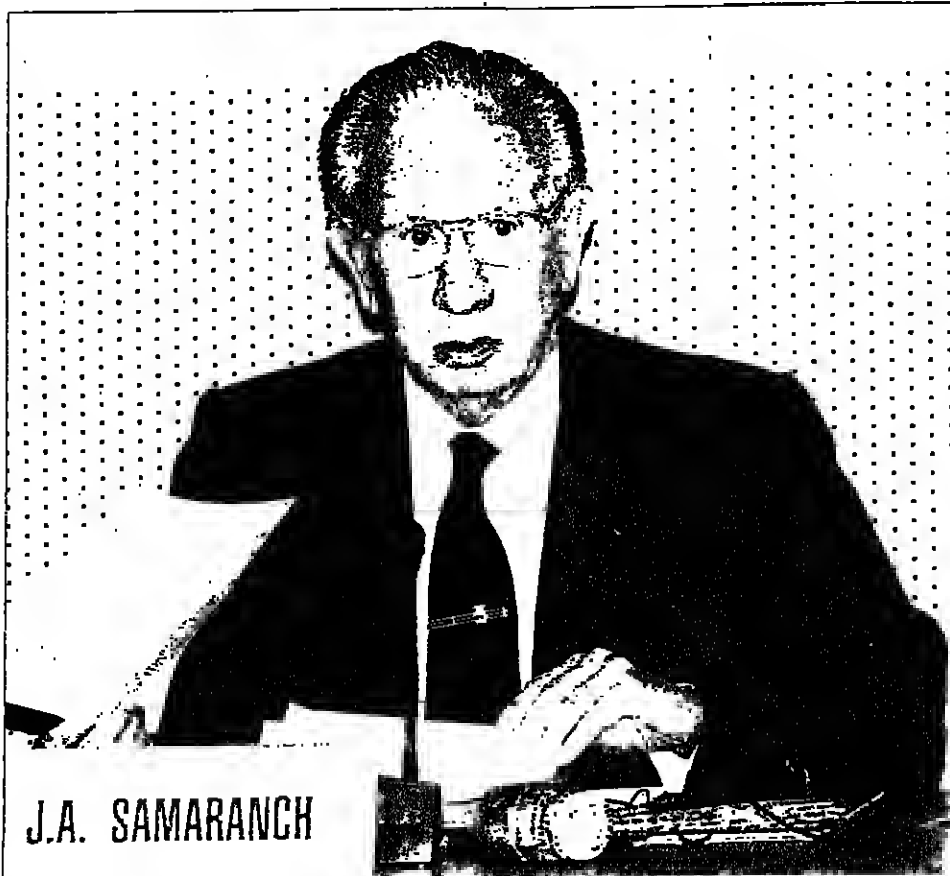
Each of the accused will have 20 minutes to defend themselves before their future is put to the vote.

The highest current worry for the IOC is that some of the disgraced members will refuse to go quietly.

"Of course it is a fear. It is impossible to know what they might have, what damage they might try to inflict," said an IOC source speaking on condition of anonymity.

The highest potential problem, sources say, is Ganga, by far the most powerful of the six. The 65-year-old has been one of the most influential figures in African sport for nearly 20 years.

Ganga insists he is innocent, claiming he is a victim of a witch-hunt. The Pound



J.A. SAMARANCH

Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, opens in Lausanne on the second day of the executive commission to prepare the 108th session of the IOC which will start Wednesday (AFP photo)

inquiry revealed that the former head of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa received several hundred thousands of dollars in gifts and cash from Salt Lake City, the host of the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Ganga has been further angered by the fact that would-be presidential hopeful and IOC vice-president Kim Un-yong of South Korea has escaped with a warning.

The Salt Lake report alleged Kim had used his powerful Olympic position to help land lucrative jobs in telecommunications and music for his two children.

Kim firmly denied the claims, accusing Pound of trying to prevent him from taking over from IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch when the former

Spanish diplomat retired in 2001.

According to sources, several of the six-man Pound inquiry opposed expelling Kim, because of fears of what he might do because of his intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the IOC.

They won their case and Kim escaped with a severe censure.

But Pound publicly warned Kim that if any further evidence turned up against him, he would call for his ouster from the Olympic movement.

Close advisors to Kim, however, have told him now is the time to attack the Canadian lawyer and try to oust him.

While such an internal battle may not capture the public interest in the same

way the Salt Lake City affair did, sources admit it could do even more damage.

The top 11 Olympic sponsors, most American, who pay \$50 million for the exclusive rights to use the Olympic rings, are strong backers of Pound and an IOC without him could see some of them jump ship.

One sponsor has given the IOC until next week to set in place the beginning of a new, clean, Olympic movement or it will withdraw its support.

"First we have to get through Wednesday, then the rest of the week, then the rest of the year. Perhaps then we will know if we have managed to get out of this mess," said one top IOC official.

Silver Charm defends Dubai World Cup crown

DUBAI (AFP) — Defending champion Silver Charm from the United States will lead a field of just eight or nine entries for the five-million-dollar 1999 Dubai World Cup.

Trainer Bob Baffert has also entered the Kentucky Derby winner Real Quiet for the world's richest horse race on March 28.

Victory Gallop, trained by Elliott Walden and winner of the third leg of the Belmont Stakes, and last year's fourth-placed Malek, from Richard Mandella's stables, complete a quartet of American challengers.

Despite an additional one million dollars to the purse from first three editions, the organisers said Tuesday that no changes were expected to the provisional line-up.

"We are now more or less certain to have eight runners," said organising committee chairman Michael Osborne.

Spindrift, the winner of the Maktoum challenge, is also a possibility but we're not yet sure," he added.

But he brushed off what looks set to be the smallest field yet for the race.

"Numbers are not important for the Dubai World Cup as we are guaranteed one thing, that of the top horses fit and sound in the world, we have got the best," Osborne said.

Osborne admitted, however, to being "a bit disappointed" that Australian champion Might and Power and France's Andre Fabre-trained Arc winner Saganis are not taking part.

The Godolphin stable, owned by United Arab Emirates Defence Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the crown prince of Dubai, will have Frankie Dettori on board English Derby winner High Rise.

Goldolphin racing manager Simon Crisford is also lining up Almutawakel, Central Park and Daylami.

The 2,000 metres race, Sheikh Mohammad's idea, was first run in 1996 at the desert city's Nad al-Sheba track.



Elie Meshantaf, captain of Lebanon's Sagasse team, flashes the victory sign as he holds up the trophy of the Arab Club Basketball Championship, 15 March 1999 in Ghazir, north of Beirut. Sagasse won its game against Egypt's Al-Ahli 79-67, securing the title for the second successive year (AFP photo)

Cyprus women kick off uphill campaign for football fame

NICOSIA (AFP) — Kicking but definitely not screaming, Cypriot women are determined to show that they can make Cyprus a team to be reckoned with among the footballing nations of the world. The island's football-mad men may have failed to reach the World Cup finals, now it's the turn of the women to have a go.

The long haul started Sunday when an assortment of housewives, students, secretaries, check-out girls and school teachers laced up their boots and took to the field for Cyprus's first ever women's soccer championship.

Only five teams are taking part in the championship that runs until April 18 and as the fledgling women's game currently boasts only 70 registered players, it could be something of an uphill battle to get together a world beating national team.

"There hasn't been a lot of quality in some of the friendly games and whether the standard will be high I can't say, but you have to start from somewhere," Cyprus Football Association women's committee chairman Tassos Katsikides told AFP.

A total of 35 goals hit the back of the net in only two games on the first day of the championship on Sunday, and one player with title favourites Lefkothea Nicosia alone scored 10.

Football is a national passion in Cyprus, with 56 teams playing in four divisions — not to mention another 250 or so non-league village teams — and crowds of 20,000 turning up for major games.

But that's the men's game. Only a couple of hundred spectators turned

out for the two matches on Sunday, almost as sparse as the blades of grass on their primitive pitches.

Nevertheless, Katsikides is optimistic that hooligan-free matches will offer family entertainment.

"Watching women play football will give true meaning to the beautiful game," he said.

The first all-woman club here, La Bella, was set up back in 1982, and is one of the favourites to win the league.

The youngest club, Daphne Troullon, is an outsider. Only a month old, it's the youngest in another way too — the Daphne babes, as they are known, are all aged between 13 and 18. Their three weekly training sessions compete for time with their homework.

"We are at an experimental stage and what matters are the efforts made by the girls to play football but I'm not sure if we should start comparing results with other countries," CFA general manager Andreas Stylianou said.

Nothing daunted, Katsikides sees a great future for women's football on this eastern Mediterranean island. Once the league is up and running, the idea is that it will furnish players for a national side.

Katsikides has already been invited to attend the women's World Cup later this year, and is optimistic that Cyprus will be in a position to qualify for the next World Cup in 2003.

And in this macho society, that would put the boot on the other foot.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Athletics half-time show for football match

ZURICH (AFP) — The world chiefs of athletics and football met here on Monday to discuss ways of boosting the popularity of track and field by combining events with football matches. FIFA President Sepp Blatter and International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) President Primo Nebiolo are keen to increase cooperation between the two federations. An IAAF statement said this was of "paramount importance in this particularly difficult time for the Olympic movement, where both of the federations consider it essential to present a common front." The first concrete sign of such cooperation is planned to take place on May 5, when the new Olympic stadium in Seville will be inaugurated with a number of athletics events taking place during the half-time break of the football match between Spain and Croatia. The stadium will host the World Athletics Championships from August 20-29. Blatter will continue to meet with Nebiolo to plan further experimental events.

Flutie signs deal with Bills

BUFFALO, New York (AFP) — Doug Flutie, once dubbed too small to play in the National Football League, has agreed to a four-year contract extension worth \$22 million with the Buffalo Bills. "Flutie-mania" captured Buffalo fans last season with eight victories in 11 starts as the Bills rolled into the playoffs. Flutie, 36, received a \$6 million signing bonus in the new deal. Replacing injured Rob Johnson, the eight-year veteran Canadian Football League star completed 57 per cent of his passes for 2,711 yards, 20 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. He also ran 49 times for 245 yards.

Yankee manager set for cancer surgery

TAMPA (AFP) — New York Yankees manager Joe Torre, diagnosed last week with prostate cancer, will have surgery Thursday and will not be with the World Series champions for one to three months. Torre learned he had cancer on Wednesday and two

days later went to Washington University Hospital in St. Louis for tests before returning to training camp Monday. A subdued Torre refused to set a timetable for his return and, as expected, said that bench coach and close friend Don Zimmer will serve as interim manager until he returns. "My priority is getting well and getting this over with," Torre, 58, considered radiation treatment before deciding on the surgery. His diagnosis rocked the World Series champions and came on the same day that outfielder Darryl Strawberry returned to the field following colon cancer surgery last October.

Bucks coach fined \$25,000

NEW YORK (AFP) — Milwaukee coach George Karl was fined \$25,000 by the National Basketball Association here Monday for comments made about his former team, the Seattle SuperSonics. Karl dubbed Sonics general manager Wally Walker "incompetent" last week after guiding the Bucks past Seattle 101-97 on Wednesday. Karl coached the SuperSonics for more than six seasons, leading them to the 1996 NBA finals before being fired last year.

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre

CINEMA TEL:463-4144
PHILADELPHIA '1'

Tom Hanks &
Edward Burns ...in

SAVING
PRIVATE RYAN

Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15

CINEMA TEL:463-4144
PHILADELPHIA '2'

Robert De Niro... in

RONIN

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:5699238
PLAZA

Comedian
Adel Imam... in

AL ZA'EM

Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:5677420
CONCORDE

Tom Hanks &
Edward Burns ...in

SAVING
PRIVATE RYAN
Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15
CONCORDE 2
ALWAD MAHROUS
BTA' AL WAZIR

CINEMA TEL:5934793
GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN
www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

DANCE
WITH ME

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

CINEMA TEL:5934793
GALLERIA 2

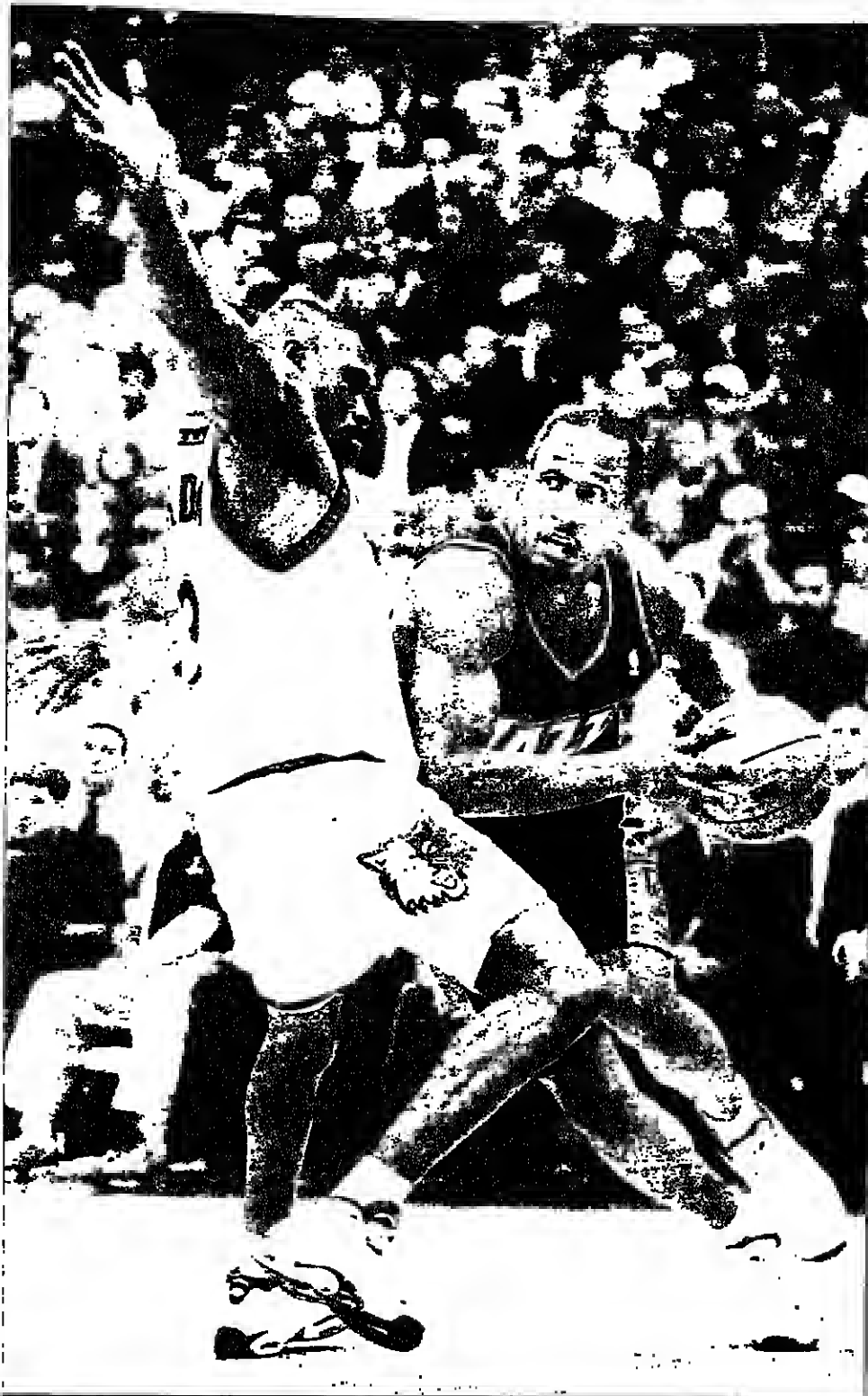
ABDOUN
www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

Michael Douglas ...in
A PERFECT
MURDER

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

Hisham Yanes Theatre
TEL: 4625155

CLOSED



Utah Jazz Shandon Anderson (R) tries to get by Minnesota Timberwolves Reggie Jordan in the second period at Target Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota (AFP photo)

Sprewell leads Knicks past Bucks

MILWAUKEE (R) — Latrell Sprewell scored a season-high 28 points to lead the Knicks in their finest offensive effort of the year as New York avenged a pair of losses with a 108-102 win over the Milwaukee Bucks on Monday.

Allan Houston added 22 points and Larry Johnson chipped in 21, hitting 3-of-4 from 3-point range, as the Knicks shot 51 per cent (36-for-70) from the field.

Chris Dudley, filling in for injured star centre Patrick Ewing, grabbed 11 rebounds for New York.

Sprewell, a Milwaukee native, scored eight points in a key 18-8 third-quarter run to help the Knicks avoid being swept by the Bucks after two one-point losses earlier this season.

Sprewell's 3-pointer with 1:10 left in the third gave the Knicks their biggest lead at 84-70.

Ray Allen almost single-handedly kept the Bucks in the game, scoring 16 of his season-high 29 in the fourth quarter.

The Knicks improved to 13-9 with their second consecutive victory, possibly saving the job of coach Jeff Van Gundy.

Weekend newspaper reports in New York said Van Gundy would be fired if the Knicks did not start winning immediately.

"We knew we had to play a good one on the road and prove we could win against a quality team," Sprewell said. "Tonight was a total team effort."

At Minnesota, Karl Malone had 17 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists as the Utah Jazz maintained the league's best record with an 80-83 victory over the Timberwolves.

Howard Eisley led a strong effort off the bench, notching 15 of the 37 points collected by the Jazz reserves, while Greg Ostertag pulled down 13 rebounds as Utah improved to 18-4 with their fifth straight win.

Joe Smith led Minnesota with 26 points and 17 rebounds and Terrell Brandon, in his first home game since being acquired from Milwaukee last week, had 21 points and six assists.

In Dallas, Isaiah Rider scored 30 points and Arvydas Sabonis collected 15 points and 16 rebounds as the Portland Trail Blazers cruised to a 106-91 win over the Mavericks.

Damon Stoudamire added 18 points and six assists for the Blazers, who stayed half a game behind Utah in the race for the best overall record in the NBA.

In Orlando, Darrell Armstrong stole George Lynch's mid-court in-bounds pass and drove for a layup at the buzzer to lift the Magic to a 74-73 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

"Darrell Armstrong made one of the biggest plays this franchise has ever seen," Magic forward Horace Grant said.

The finish capped a great effort for Armstrong, who had 14 points, six assists and four steals off the bench while holding NBA scoring leader Allen Iverson to a season-low 14 points.

In Chicago, Brevin Knight atoned for a pair of turnovers late in regulation with two clutch free throws in overtime to help the Cleveland Cavaliers to an 89-85 win over the Bulls.

Knight had nine points, eight rebounds, five steals and dished out 16 assists for the Cavs, who held Chicago scoreless for the first four minutes of overtime.

Cedric Henderson scored 22 points, including a key three-point play in overtime, and Shawn Kemp added 17 and 11 rebounds for Cleveland.

In Toronto, Doug Christie scored 18 points and Dee Brown and John Wallace added 17 apiece off the bench as the Raptors closed the game on a 9-1 burst to defeat the Charlotte Hornets 89-82.

In Denver, Antonio McDyess scored 21 points in three quarters and the Nuggets had six players in double figures in a 110-84 rout of the woeful Vancouver Grizzlies.

The win snapped Denver's seven-game losing streak and extended Vancouver's slide to 12 games.

At Golden State, Chris Webber scored 20 points against his former team to lead six players in double figures as the Sacramento Kings beat the Warriors 111-105.

Tariq Abdul-Wahad added 18 points and Predrag Stojakovic scored six of his 12 during a 19-4 fourth quarter burst that put the game away.

Inter pin hopes on troubled Ronaldo

PARIS (AFP) — Inter Milan are pinning their hopes on ailing Brazilian superstar Ronaldo to help them revive their season by beating Manchester United in their Champions' League second-leg match in Milan on Wednesday.

Ronaldo may be having the worst season of his career, claims his constant pain and has hardly played recently, but he still seems Inter's best chance of scoring at least two goals against United, who appear to have their strongest squad for years.

The combination of crosses from England international David Beckham and pinpoint headers from 13-million-pound (\$20 million dollar) striker Dwight Yorke helped United to a 2-0 win at Old Trafford.

Inter have looked a shadow of the team which reached second place in Serie A last season.

Last July, Ronaldo had strange fitness problems — including a fit — before the World Cup final in France and he has not seemed the same player since.

He has tendinitis, but his all-round fitness remains a mystery after he missed training on Monday, following a sleepless night due to stomach trouble and a migraine.

But he played twice last week, in the final half-hour of Inter's Italian Cup defeat and the first half of the derby draw with AC Milan.

He failed to score, but showed occasional flashes of his true skills.

Wednesday night's match, when he will probably be partnered by Roberto Baggio and Ivan Zamorano, will be his moment of truth.

"This is going to be the most important match of our season," said Ronaldo. "Our pride is at stake and we must show that we are up to the mark."

He will be closely marked by Dutchman Jaap Stam, his former teammate at PSV Eindhoven and the rock around which United's defence is built.

United can sit back and wait to hit the Italians on the counter-attack and a single away goal should be enough to kill the quarterfinal stone dead.

"The key for us is to score," said United manager Alex Ferguson. "If we do we'll win."

In-form Ukrainian champions Dynamo Kiev go into their return-leg Champions' League quarterfinal against Spanish giants Real Madrid on the back of a home win in their domestic championship.

On Thursday, Dynamo won their first match after the league restart, defeating Metallurg 2-0 with goals from Andrei Shevchenko and Sergei Serebrennikov.

Kiev will be looking for a repeat of the sparkling form which saw them play out a 1-1 draw at the imposing Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, leaving the Spanish defend-

ing champions with a mountain to climb.

Italian champions Juventus will be turning to striker Filippo Inzaghi to reach the semifinals, when they defend a slender 2-1 lead against Olympiakos in Athens.

Inzaghi has returned from injury to goalscoring form in each of his last three matches — breaking the deadlock in the first leg against the Greeks and then bagging match-winners against Sampdoria and Udinese.

"It's going to be a difficult match, we all know that," Inzaghi admitted. "Greek teams are known for bringing out everything they have when they're playing in front of a home crowd."

"We're not worried, but we've got absolute respect for Olympiakos. They may not have any big-name stars in the team but they are a good, well-organised side."

"SuperPippo," as he is known by Juventus fans, scored one but missed another five chances in the first leg in Turin, albeit after a prolonged absence through injury.

Juventus can choose from Daniel Fonseca, Juan Esnaider and Nicola Amoroso to partner him up front, supported by Golden

Ball winner Zinedine Zidane.

The Frenchman came off during Saturday's win with Udinese to protect a twisted ankle, but should be available. Further tests will be needed for Uruguayan

Bayern still go into the second leg as strong favourites.

They hammered their Bundesliga colleagues 2-0 in the opening leg a fortnight ago — thanks in part to an Elber goal — and

CHAMPIONS' LEAGUE PREVIEW

Athens.

Goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi, both of whom are in doubt.

Olympiakos, meanwhile, have worries of their own, aside from the mixed blessing of performing in front of 80,000 screaming fans.

Goalkeeper Dimitrios Eleftheropoulos, whose exploits in Turin prevented his team losing by a tennis score, twisted an ankle on Saturday and there are fitness doubts too over Yugoslav striker Ilija Ivic.

But coach Dusan Bajevic remains confident that his side can defy the odds again here on Wednesday night, after snatching a priceless penalty in injury-time in Italy two weeks ago.

"People have said that we robbed Juventus with our goal," he complained, "but the truth is that this team never gives up."

Meanwhile, Bayern Munich must prepare for their all-German tie with Kaiserslautern without their star Brazilian striker Giovane Elber who has torn ligaments in his left knee.

legitimised their hopes of winning Bundesliga, German Cup and European Cup titles.

Former German great Franz Beckenbauer reckons the Bayern team is as good as the one he led to three European Cup trophies in 1974-76, but can Bayern live without their clinical goalscorer?

Coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said: "Now the others have a chance to make a name for themselves. We're not FC Elber, we are FC Bayern."

"I'm not worried," manager Uli Hoeness responded. "With (Carsten) Jancker, (Ali) Daci, (Alexander) Zickler and (Hasan) Salihamidovic we have enough talent up front to compensate."

Not so Kaiserslautern, whose number one striker Olaf Marschall is also wrestling with knee problems.

He missed the first leg game in Munich and estimates his chances of being fit by Wednesday at five per cent.

Moya, Sampras top ATP rankings

PARIS (AFP) — Leading ATP Tour men's tennis rankings issued on Monday:

1. Carlos Moya (Spa)	3484 pts
2. Pete Sampras (USA)	3447
3. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus)	3382
4. Alex Corretja (Spa)	3250
5. Patrick Rafter (Aus)	3115
6. Tim Henman (Gbr)	2826
7. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	2677
8. Marcelo Rios (Chi)	2434
9. Andre Agassi (USA)	2376
10. Todd Martin (USA)	2300
11. Mark Philippoussis (Aus)	2264
12. Karol Kucera (Svk)	2238
13. Greg Rusedski (Gbr)	2145
14. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	1946
15. Thomas Enqvist (Swe)	1818
16. Albert Costa (Spa)	1809
17. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra)	1697
18. Thomas Johansson (Swe)	1614
19. Tommy Haas (Ger)	1600
20. Felix Mantilla (Spa)	1589
21. Cedric Pioline (Fra)	1520
22. Francisco Clavet (Spa)	1278
23. Wayne Ferreira (Rsa)	1234
24. Thomas Muster (Aut)	1224
25. Marc Rosset (Swi)	1212
26. Marat Safin (Rus)	1204
27. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	1167
28. Byron Black (Zim)	1164
29. Jan Siemerink (Ned)	1132
30. Nicolas Pietrangeli (Ger)	1122



Carlos Moya



Marcelo Rios

RESULTS

Toronto	89	Charlotte	82
Orlando	74	Philadelphia	73
New York	108	Milwaukee	102
Utah	90	Minnesota	83
Cleveland	89	Chicago	85 (OT)
Portland	106	Dallas	91
Denver	110	Vancouver	84
Sacramento	111	Golden State	105

London

5 Days/4 Nights

5* 799 JD

4* 659 JD

3* 575 JD

Kuala Lumpur

8 Days/7 Nights

5* 855 JD

4* 775 JD

3* 705 JD

Bangkok

8 Days/7 Nights

5* 739 JD

4* 639 JD

3* 589 JD

Dubai

4 Days/3 Nights

5* 519 JD

4* 435 JD

Cairo

5 Days/4 Nights

5* 299 JD

MUCH MORE

Travel One 55 35 777

BARAKAT

EXHIBITION EST.

gladly announces to its dear customers that an

EXHIBITION OF SOUVENIRS, PERSIAN AND KASHMIRI SILKEN CARPETS

will be held at Petra Hall, RADISSON SAS HOTEL, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, March 18, 19, and 20, 1999, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Valuable gifts + prizes as well as special sale prices on the occasion of MOTHER'S DAY

For more information, please call tel. 53 45 487

Fraud report sparks EU political crisis European leaders vow swift action after mass EC resignation

BRUSSELS (R) — European Union states stepped up the pace on Tuesday to fill a political vacuum left by the mass resignation of a humiliated European Commission and force radical reform of the bloc's discredited top management.

All 20 members of the EU executive quit in the early hours of Tuesday after a panel of independent experts accused them of losing control of the huge Brussels bureaucracy and turning a blind eye to widespread fraud and cronyism.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who as EU president has to solve the crisis at the top of Europe's bloated bureaucracy, said EU leaders would try to name a successor to commission President Jacques Santer at a Berlin summit next week.

After talks in London with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Schröder told journalists a further informal summit might be needed after Berlin to finalise the choice.

"Europe must remain capable of action," he said.

Blair added: "The situation has changed dramatically and we have to act."

An embittered Santer earlier

launched a counteroffensive, deriding the experts' report as "shocking and unbalanced." He said he was "whiter than white" and would stay on as head of the executive until national governments sought to replace him.

Blair said Santer's reaction was "wholly inadequate" and urged him to stand down quickly to make way for a "real political heavyweight" with a new contract and a reform mandate.

Blair said he would push to reform the unelected and largely unaccountable EU executive which drafts and implements EU law.

French President Jacques Chirac said the EU should learn from the "unprecedented crisis" and reform its institutions to make them more effective, responsible and close to the people.

France called for a stronger executive, with fewer commissioners, and insisted EU enlargement should be delayed until reforms were agreed.

While some commissioners joined Santer in airing their frustration at the report's blanket attack on the executive, others urged deep cultural

change.

Vice President Sir Leon Brittan told a European parliament committee the commission should accept the report's conclusions and focus on responding to the charges.

"I don't think this is the time to carp at the content of the report. What is now needed is a comprehensive root and branch reform of the commission," he said.

Brittan said some EU programmes which suffered from a lack of resources should be axed, internal disciplinary procedures beefed up and external management consultants called in to review management structures.

The now "caretaker" commission's attempts to conduct business as usual fell on deaf ears as European Parliament President Jose Maria Gil-Robles demanded the team should go.

"They must leave now and not in nine months time," Gil-Robles told a news conference.

He added that Europe's citizens would never understand if the commission stayed in office unchanged until the end of the year just "because the heads of state and govern-

ment are not capable of agreeing on the names of the successors."

National governments will discuss their options for naming a new commission over the next days and weeks as they try to head off a crisis just as the EU reshapes its finances to prepare for an ambitious eastern expansion.

While Britain and Germany called for swift change, Italy and Spain said Santer and his team should see out their five year mandate which expires next January.

EU diplomats said that legally, the EU could not appoint a new commission to start a five-year term ahead of the January 2000 deadline.

The experts' scathing 144-page judgement catalogued gross irregularities in the management of programmes and funds in the commission's keeping, while accusing research commissioner and ex-French Prime Minister Edith Cresson of favouritism.

The EU's fledgling euro single currency, which initially fell on news of the commission's resignation, made up ground on Tuesday and stood almost one cent higher at just under \$1.10 at around 2030 GMT.



WORLD'S BIGGEST CAN LAUNCHED ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY: Andi Munro puts the finishing touches Tuesday to what is claimed to be the world's biggest can at its unveiling on the foreshore of Sydney Harbour. Australia is the fastest growing Guinness beer market and the launch of the can, which stands 4.5 metres tall and can hold approximately 300 litres (820 pints), coincides with St. Patrick's Day today (Reuters photo)

Dubai unveils world's longest sofa

DUBAI (AFP) — Dubai's tired tourists and residents, worn-out by the excess of the emirate's massive shopping festival which opens Thursday, will be able to rest their weary legs and waltz on the world's longest sofa. The cream-coloured, 33-metre long sofa, which took 20 people a month to build, was unveiled this week next to Dubai's creek. "The theme of this year's festival is 'the family get together of the Millennium' and we chose to build the world's longest sofa as families often get together and sit on sofas," said Abdul Basit Al Janahi, the festival's events coordinator.

Squirrel cuts power supply

DUESSELDORF (R) — A wet squirrel cut the power supply to 5,000 people in a German town when it walked through a 10,000-volt switching station. Technicians found the squirrel lying dead next to two transformers, a technician for the Westfalen Electricity company said on Tuesday. "It didn't keep a safe distance from the machinery" and caused a short circuit, he said.

Panda leaves for urgent rendezvous with mate

SHANGHAI (AFP) — A male giant panda from the Shanghai Zoo has been dispatched to southwestern Chongqing after zookeepers discovered his mate, Xing Xing, is on heat, the official Shanghai Star said Tuesday. 19-year-old Chuan Chuan is in "perfect condition" after arriving at the Chongqing zoo last week for his important mission, a zoo source was quoted as saying. "His partner, 17-year-old Xing Xing is still in calm mood, and full preparations have been made for their mating," the source added.

Teenager steals to play the market

SYDNEY (AFP) — A 17-year-old boy wrote out more than four million dollars (\$2.4 million) worth of dud cheques to trade on the Australian stock market, a Sydney children's court was told Tuesday. However, only \$5,000 dollars (\$53,000) was cleared before the boy was apprehended. The high school student, now 18, pleaded guilty to nine counts of obtaining money by deception in 1998. The then 17-year-old had set up two companies, asking an 18-year-old friend to be the company secretary and director. The youth opened two accounts, each with 15 dollars (\$9.50), and over a few months traded shares and wrote out a number of personal cheques.

Child destroys modern art exhibit

TORONTO (R) — A six-year-old destroyed part of a \$35,000 modern art exhibit at the national gallery of Canada in Ottawa, clambering up on the work and sending glass panels and lenses crashing to the floor. The child was not injured, but the "inquisitor's dictionary," 10 metre diameter circle of wood and glass panels, was in pieces. "The child was probably trying to get a better perspective of the work," said Karen Oxorn, communications officer for the gallery. Gallery officials roped-off and cleaned up the area but said it could take months, even years, to restore the piece. The gallery has not yet contacted the artist. Vancouver-based Christine Davis, who is in Spain.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egypt denies Abu Nidal in Cairo

TABA (AFP) — Egyptian Interior Minister Habib Al Adly on Tuesday categorically denied reports that Palestinian militant Abu Nidal was living in Cairo. "If he were here we would have taken the necessary measures and we would have announced his presence here," Adly told AFP in this Red Sea resort. The Arabic-language newspaper Al Hayat, quoting eminent British author and Middle East expert Patrick Seale, reported that Abu Nidal, one of the world's most-wanted men, was "well and living in Cairo" under house arrest. Seale also reported that Abu Nidal was offering the services of his "now paralysed" headline Fatah-Revolutionary Council faction to security services in their fight against Muslim fundamentalist groups, Al Hayat said.

Iraq announces U.S.-British sorties

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq confirmed Tuesday that its anti-aircraft defences had fired on U.S. planes which bombed civilian and military sites in the north of the country, the official INA news agency said. A statement from the Incirlik air base in southern Turkey earlier said U.S. warplanes had bombed several Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery sites in the northern no-fly zone. "At 11:00 a.m. Iraqi time [0800 GMT], eight enemy formations coming from Turkey carried out 15 sorties above the Erbil, Dohuk and Nineveh provinces," an Iraqi military spokesman said, quoted by INA. "The planes bombed their civilian and military targets and some of our anti-aircraft defence sites in Mosul," the spokesman said. The statement did not say if anyone was injured in the attack.

Egypt police investigate body part sales

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian society supposedly raising abandoned illegitimate children is under investigation after a parliamentary complaint that it had been killing them to sell body parts to hospitals, police sources said on Tuesday. Ten members of parliament filed a complaint to the general prosecutor on Monday alleging that a children's organisation in Minufiya, 60 km north-west Cairo, was selling body parts of children under 13 years of age to privately-run hospitals, police said. They said the parliamentarians became suspicious when 25 out of a total 32 children in the society died over the last three months. The members of parliament alleged that these illegal deals, involving large sums of money, occur with the knowledge and collaboration of certain powerful figures.

Israeli jets strike Hizbollah stronghold

TYRE (AFP) — Israeli warplanes raided suspected Hizbollah guerrilla positions north of the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, police said. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage. Israeli fighter-bombers fired two missiles into a valley near the village of Jabal Al Botom, north of the western edge of the buffer zone, police said. An Israeli army spokesman confirmed the raid on suspected Lebanese guerrilla positions. Meanwhile, Israeli artillery pounded with more than 50 shells the outskirts of the villages of Zebqine, Yater and Kafra as well as other nearby locations east of Tyre, Lebanese police said. The Israeli strikes came after two positions of Israel's South Lebanon Army militia in Tair Harfa and Rahrah in the central sector of the border zone were targeted with rockets and mortar rounds, they added.

Iranian girls caught dressing as boys

TEHRAN (AFP) — Three teenage Iranian girls were brought before a Tehran court for walking the streets of the capital dressed as boys, the Iranian newspaper Khorasan reported Tuesday. "We always dreamed of being boys," the three told the judge Monday, adding that they had defied the Islamic republic's strict female dress code in order to be "left alone." Parastou, Elnaz and Mojghan — ages 15, 16 and 17 respectively — were also charged with leaving their family homes without permission. "I was working in a hair salon and one day Elnaz and Mojghan came and asked me to cut their hair very short," Parastou told the judge. "That's when I knew they had a cool plan," she said, adding that she took part to show her "solidarity" with the other two. Faced with their transvestite tales the judge ruled himself incompetent in the matter and referred the case to another court.

Saudi man beheaded for murdering girl

RIYADH (AP) — A Saudi man convicted of murdering a girl was beheaded in Saudi Arabia, the Okaz daily reported Tuesday. Abdullah Ben Ali Al Owajjah was executed in the capital, Riyadh, Monday after he was found guilty of shooting Hayat Bent Saad Al Mutairi several times, the Arabic-language paper said. It gave no other details.

Iraqi pilgrims fly to Saudi in defiance of U.N. embargo

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq defiantly issued a new challenge to the international community on Tuesday as it sent 110 sick and elderly pilgrims to Saudi Arabia by plane, flouting an eight-year-old U.N. air embargo.

The Iraqi Airways Ilyushin-76 took off from Baghdad's Al Rasheed military airport on Tuesday morning "bound for Mecca for the pilgrimage," or annual Hajj, the official INA news agency said.

Airport officials in the Red Sea port of Jeddah, who asked not to be named, said the plane had arrived in the kingdom but did specify its route or how it was welcomed. The kingdom's media has remained mute on the issue.

The delegation, headed by religious endowments minister, Abdul Muneem Ahmad Saleh, made the flight in violation of U.N. Resolution 670, the September 1990 U.N. air transport embargo on Iraq.

The pilgrims arrived at the vast and dusty airport in southern Baghdad in four buses. As they disembarked they gathered to recite prayers before being led into a reception area.

After changing into the traditional white unsewn cloth robes of people undertaking the Hajj, they stopped to pray again before boarding the plane.

Inside the aircraft the pilgrims sat on four rows of seats stretching from the front to the back. They repeated the phrase: "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet."

A sheep was slaughtered outside for the occasion and bloody handprints were put on the fuselage, a tradition to ward off evil.

"We are taking this plane as

a challenge to the sanctions against us. Iraqis are people of peace and dignity," Hajj Shehab Ahmad Abdullah, one of the pilgrims, told AFP.

The head of Iraqi Airways, Rabbil Mohammad Saleh, said he hoped the flight would mark the end of the air embargo.

In 1997, Iraq also sent Muslims by plane to perform the pilgrimage and the aircraft was given permission to land by the Saudi authorities.

The aircraft first had to enter Jordanian airspace before crossing into Saudi airspace because of the U.S.-British enforced southern no-fly zone that cuts off Iraq's airlink to Saudi Arabia.

The pilot of Tuesday's flight, Muayad Yunes Al Juburi, said the move came "on the orders of President Saddam Hussein to transport pilgrims who cannot make the journey by road," a trip of about 2,000 kilometres.

He said he did not expect attacks from Arab aircraft, but "it is possible that U.S. planes attack us."

U.S. and British fighter jets have had almost daily run-ins with Iraqi air defences in northern and southern Iraq since the four-day Desert Fox bombing campaign in December.

A first group of some 2,000 Iraqi pilgrims arrived in Saudi Arabia by road on Monday as a second group of about 1,000 people on board 30 buses left Baghdad.

About 4,000 Iraqi pilgrims are expected to travel to Saudi Arabia by road this year for the Hajj. Last year, only 2,000 Iraqis made the pilgrimage, which all Muslims must make at least once in their lives if they have the means.

Israeli chief of staff opposes escalation in south Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's top army commander General Shaul Mofaz rejected calls on Tuesday for the Israeli military to adopt a tougher policy in Lebanon.

"I do not believe the army should change its methods in Lebanon, risking a military escalation which could make the defence of settlements in northern Israel more difficult," Mofaz told parliament's defence and foreign affairs committee.

He was responding to a call from committee chairman Uri Landau for the army to "strike the economic and civilian infrastructure in Lebanon as well as targets linked to the Syrian presence in the country."

"Every time we are attacked, the Lebanese and Syrians must pay a heavy price," said Landau, a member of the Likud

Party of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In December Netanyahu raised the possibility that he might authorise strikes against such targets as power stations in Beirut in reprisal for anti-Israeli attacks carried out by the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah guerrilla group.

A second senior Israeli general said Tuesday that Hizbollah had nearly doubled its attacks on Israel's self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon over the past year.

Major General Dan Halutz said the escalation included continuing Hizbollah efforts to push through the security zone and strike at northern Israel and underscored the necessity for Israel's army to remain in Lebanon.

Halutz, deputy head of the army's operational division and

number three in the general staff, said Hizbollah had stepped-up above all "stand-off" attacks with mortars, missiles and road-side bombs following its lack of success in "face-to-face fighting."

In the last year, Hizbollah has nearly doubled their activity, counting the quantity of stand-off firings, explosives attacks and confrontations," Halutz told a group of foreign journalists in Tel Aviv.

But he said the army had been more successful in limiting casualties from Hizbollah attacks than the previous year.

Halutz also said the army planned to continue honouring the so-called "Grapes of Wrath" truce accord reached with Hizbollah in 1996 despite calls from Defence Minister Moshe Arens to review the understandings.

Joint Israeli-Palestinian poll shows majority back peace

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — A joint Israeli-Palestinian opinion poll published on Tuesday showed almost equal support for the peace process on both sides of the dispute but wide differences over the future of Jerusalem.

The survey found 91.3 per cent of Palestinians would reject any deal making Jerusalem the unified capital of Israel while 70 per cent of Israelis said they would oppose any accord declaring Arab east Jerusalem capital of a future

Palestinian state.

The poll, conducted by the Palestinian Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC) and the Tami Steinmetz Centre for Peace and Research (TSCPR) at Tel Aviv University, was the first joint survey on such politically charged issues.

The JMCC surveyed 1,201 Palestinian adults while the TSCPR polled 500 Israeli Jews and 501 Israeli Arabs.

JMCC Director Ghassan Al Khatib said that 64.3 per cent of Israelis and 61.4 per cent of

Palestinians support or strongly support the landmark Oslo peace process.

"The Palestinians were more sceptical and less supportive of the Oslo deals because they feel frustrated with the freeze in peace moves," Khatib told a news conference in Jerusalem.

Asked if the Oslo deal would bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians in coming years, 6.3 per cent of Palestinians said they "greatly believed" it would, compared with 14.5 per cent of the Israelis.

Turkey says PKK responsible for lethal Istanbul fire

ISTANBUL (Agencies) — Turkish authorities declared on Tuesday that the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) had claimed responsibility for a petrol bomb attack that killed 12 people at an Istanbul shopping centre, but the PKK immediately denied any involvement.

"The PKK claimed responsibility for the attack," Istanbul's governor Erol Cakir told a news conference. "It has been understood that separatist terrorists were involved in most of the other attacks as well."

But a spokesman for the PKK denied that the Kurdish rebels had carried out the attack in the Goztepe district on Istanbul's Asian side, which also injured six people.

"This is not the PKK's style. The PKK dissociates itself from the attack and would not do such a thing," a PKK spokesman in Vienna, Erol Polat, told AFP by phone.

He speculated that the attack was probably carried out by another extreme Kurdish group which criticises the PKK for being soft.

Istanbul, Turkey's biggest city with a population of over 10 million, has been hit by a wave of bomb attacks since last month's capture and jailing of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.

"Since Feb. 16, a wave of terrorism was launched through directives from abroad," Cakir said.

The governor was referring to the

Belgium-based Kurdish television channel Med-TV which Ankara claims acts as the mouthpiece of the PKK.

He added that 34 different bomb attacks had been carried out in Istanbul recently, in which a total of 13 people were killed and 45 people were injured.

"But there is no reason for anxiety. I ask the public to be careful and vigilant and cooperate with the security forces," the governor said.

Meanwhile, the Turkish authorities on Tuesday declared a state of alert in Istanbul, beefing up security at tourist sites.

Extra police vehicles were stationed outside Istanbul's historical sites, such as the Topkapi palace, the Blue Mosque

and the Grand Bazaar, where security checks were also heightened at entrances.

Cakir ordered a range of security measures, including metal detectors, for stores, malls, factories, hotels, business centres, cafes, bars, restaurants, transportation terminals, stadiums and other sports facilities and parking lots.

Those places, frequented by the public, were also ordered to hire private security and have fire escapes or exits.

"We have to take necessary measures with care and in cold blood," the governor told a news conference.

On Monday, the PKK declared the entire country a war zone and threatened to carry out attacks in tourist resorts.

King designa
head King H

Opinion po